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KATY GAUMER. Illustrated.
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WHEN SARAH WENT TO SCHOOL. Illustrated.
WHEN SARAH SAVED THE DAY. Illustrated.

HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
BOSTON AND NEW YORK

KATY GAUMER

(p. 334)

“IT’S BEAUTIFUL UP HERE, IS N’T IT, KATY?”

KATY GAUMER

BY

ELSIE SINGMASTER

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
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KATY GAUMER

CHAPTER I

THE GREAT NEWS

EVERY Wednesday evening in winter Katy Gaumer went to the Millerstown post-office for her grandfather's "Welt Bote," the German paper which circulated among the Pennsylvania Germans of Millerstown. By six o'clock she and Grandfather Gaumer and Grandmother Gaumer had had supper; by half past six she had finished drying the dishes; by half past seven she had learned her lessons for the next day; and then, a scarlet shawl wrapped about her, a scarlet "nubia" on her head, scarlet mittens on her hands, Katy set forth into Millerstown's safe darkness.

Sometimes — oh, the thrill that closed her throat and ran up and down her spine and set her heart to throbbing and her eyes to dancing at sound of that closed door! — sometimes it rained and she pushed her way out into the storm as a viking might have pushed his boat from the shore into an unfriendly sea; sometimes it snowed and she lifted her hot face so that she might feel the light, cold flakes against her cheek; sometimes deep drifts lay already on the ground and she flung herself upon them or into them;

sometimes she danced back to say a second goodbye so that she might enjoy her freedom once more; sometimes she stole round under the tall pine trees and knocked ponderously at the door, knowing perfectly well that her grandmother and grandfather would only smile at each other and not stir.

Sometimes she crossed the yard in snow to her knees to rap against the kitchen window of Bevy Schnepp, who kept house for Great-Uncle Gaumer, the squire. Bevy's real name was Maria Snyder, but Katy had renamed her for one of the mythical characters of whom Millerstown held foolish discourse, and the village had adopted the title. Bevy was little and thin and a powerful worker. She was cross with almost every one in the world, even with Katy whom she adored and spoiled. There was a tradition in Millerstown that she was once about to be married, but that at the ceremony her spirit rebelled. When the preacher asked her whether she would obey, she cried out aloud, "By my soul, no!" and the match was thereupon broken off. Bevy adorned her speech with many proverbs, and she had an abiding faith in pow-wowing, and also in spooks, hexahemeron cats, and similar mysterious creatures. She had named the squire's dog "Whiskey" so that he could not be bewitched. She would as soon have thrown her cabbage plants away as to have planted them in any other planetary sign than that of the Virgin. She belonged, strangely enough, to a newly established religious sect in Millerstown, that of the

Improved New Mennonites, who had no relation to the long-established worthy followers of Menno Simons in other parts of the Pennsylvania German section. It is difficult to understand how Bevy reconciled her belief in the orthodox if sensational preaching of the Reverend Mr. Hill with her use of such superstitious rhymes as

> "Dulix, ix, ux,
> Thou comest not over Pontio,
> Pontio is over Pilato" —

to which she had recourse when trouble threatened.

Sometimes Katy untied "Whiskey" and they scampered wildly, crazily away together. Katy did everything in the same unthinking, impetuous way. Both she and Whiskey were young, both were irresponsible, both were petted, indulged, and entirely care-free. Katy was the orphan child of her grandparents' Benjamin; it was not strange that they could deny her nothing. Of her mother and father she had no recollection; to her grandparents she owed anything she might now be or might become.

To-night there was no snow upon the ground. The stars shone crisply; in the west the young moon was declining; though it was December, the season seemed more like autumn than like winter. Millerstown lay still and lovely under its leafless trees; not in the quiet of perpetual drowsiness, — Millerstown was stirring enough by day! — but in repose after the day's labor and excitement. To the east of the village the mountain rose somberly; to the south the pike climbed a hill toward the church and the schoolhouse; to the west and north lay the wide fields. To the north might be seen the dim bulk of the blast furnace with the great starlike light of the bleeder flame.

"I wonder what it looks like now from the top of the mountain," soliloquized Katy. "I would like to climb once in the dark night to the Sheep Stable. I wonder if it is any one in all Millerstown brave enough to go along in the dark. I wonder what the church looks like inside without any light. I wonder — "

Awed by the quiet, Katy stood still under the pine trees at the gate. She heard Whiskey whine to be let loose; she heard Bevy open the door of the squire's kitchen.

"Katy, Katy Gaumer! Come here once, Katy Gaumer!"

Katy did not answer. Bevy had probably a cake for her or some molasses candy; she could just as well put it in the putlock hole in the wall of grandfather's house. A putlock hole is an aperture left by the removal of a scaffolding. It is supposed to be filled in, but either the builder of the old stone house had overlooked one of the openings, or the stone placed there had fallen out. It now made a fine hiding-place for Katy's treasures.

Katy had at this moment no time to give to Bevy. Her heart throbbed, her hands clutched the gate.

She did not know why she was always so thrilled and excited when she was out alone at night.

"It is like Bethlehem," she whispered to herself, as she looked down the street, then up at the sky. "The shepherds might be watching or the kings might come."

Katy opened the gate.

"I love Millerstown," she declared. "I love Millerstown. I love everybody and everything in Millerstown."

The post-office was next to the store and on the same street as Grandfather Gaumer's. There are only three streets in the village, Main Street and Locust and Church, and all the houses are built out to the pavement in the Pennsylvania German fashion, so that the little settlement does not cover much ground. Perhaps that was why Katy, leaving Main Street and starting forth on Locust, came so soon to the end of her spasm of affection. There did not seem to be enough of the village to warrant any such fervent outpouring. At any rate, Katy's mood changed.

"I am tired of Millerstown," she declared with equal fervor. "It is dumb. It is quiet. Nothing ever happens in this place."

The residents of Locust Street were especially dull to Katy's thinking. Dumb Coonie Schnable lived here and dumb Ellie Schindler, and Essie Hill, whom she hated. Essie was the daughter of the pastor of the Improved New Mennonites, of whom Bevy

Schnepp was one. The preacher himself was tall and angular and rather blank of countenance, but Essie was small and pretty and pink and smooth of speech and by no means "dumb." Once, being a follower of her father's religious practices, Essie had risen in school and had prayed for forgiveness for Katy's outrageous impudence to the teacher, and had thereupon become his favorite forever. That Essie could really be what she seemed, that she could like to hear her father shout about the Millerstown sinners, that she could admire the silly, short-back sailor hat adorned with a Bible verse, which was the head-covering of the older female members of the Improved New Mennonite Church — this Katy could not, would not believe. Essie was a hypocrite.

Sometimes the Improved New Mennonites might be heard singing or praying hysterically. Katy had often watched them through the window, in company with Ollie Kuhns and Billy Knerr and one or two other naughty boys and girls, and had sometimes helped a little with the hysterical shrieking. To-night the little frame building was dark, and here, as down on Main Street, there was not a sound.

At the end of Locust Street, Katy went through a lane to Church Street, and there again she stood perfectly still, her eyes gleaming, her ears listening, listening, listening. On the mountain road above her, she could see dimly a little white house, which seemed to hug the hillside and to hold itself aloof from Millerstown. Here lived old Koehler, who was not really very old, but who was crazy and who was supposed to have stolen the beautiful silver communion service of Katy's church. The children used to shout wildly at him, "Bring it back! Bring it back!" and sometimes he ran after them. One sign of his lunacy was his constant praying in all sorts of queer places and at queer times that the communion service might be returned, when all he needed for the answering of his prayer was to seek the service where he had hidden it and to put it back in its place. The Millerstown children never carried their mocking to his house, since they believed that he was able to set upon them the swarms of bees that lived in hives in his little garden, among which he went without fear. They said among themselves — at least the romantic girls said — that he did not give his son, poor, handsome Alvin, enough to eat.

Suddenly Katy's heart beat with a new thrill. There was no instinct within her which was not awake or wakening. Her cheeks flushed, her scarlet mittens clasped each other. She liked handsome Alvin because she liked him — no better reason was given or required in Katy's feminine soul.

"I think Alvin is grand," exclaimed Katy to herself. "I am sorry for him. I think he is grand."

There was a sound, and Katy started. Suppose Alvin should come upon her suddenly! She went on a few steps, then once more she stopped to listen. Once more Millerstown was quiet, again she looked and listened.

Back in the shadows across the street stood a large, fine house, the home of John Hartman, Millerstown's richest man. There were in that house fine carpets and beautiful furniture. But in spite of their possessions the Hartmans were not a happy family. Mrs. Hartman was handsome and she had beautiful clothes and a sealskin coat to wear to church, but she was disturbed if leaves drifted down on the grass in her yard or if the coming of visitors made it necessary to let the sunlight in on her thick carpets. Her only child, David, was sullen and stupid and cross. Remembering the delightful bass singing of one Wenner in the church choir, Katy had run away from home when a mere baby to visit the church on a week day and from there John Hartman had driven her home. Her grandmother to whom she had fled had insisted that he had not been angry, but that he had only sent her back sternly and properly where she belonged. But the impression was not quite persuaded away. Katy used to pretend in some of her wild races that she was fleeing from John Hartman.

Suddenly there was another sound. Some Millerstonian had opened a window or had closed a shutter and Katy took to her heels. It amused her to pretend once more that she was running away from John Hartman. In a moment she had opened the door of the village store and had flashed in.

Round the stove sat four men, old and middle-aged; to the other three, Caleb Stemmel was holding forth dismally, his voice low, dreary as his mind, his mind dull as the dim room. Upon them Katy flashed in her scarlet attire, her thin legs in their black stockings completing her resemblance to a very gorgeous tanager or grosbeak. Katy had recovered from all her thrills; she was now pure mischief and impertinence.

"Nothing," complained Caleb Stemmel, "nothing is any more like it was when I was young."

"No, it is much better," commented the scarlet tanager.

"We took always trouble." Caleb paid no heed to the impertinent interruption. "We had Christmas entertainments that were entertainments — speeches and cakes and apples and a Belsnickel. But these children and these teachers, they are too lazy and too good-for-nothing."

Katy had no love for her teacher; she, too, considered him good-for-nothing; but she had less love for Caleb Stemmel.

"We are going to have a Christmas entertainment that will flax [beat] any of yours, Caleb Stemmel," she boasted.

"Yes, you will get up and say a few Dutch pieces and then you will go home."

"Well, everything was Dutch when you were young. You ought to like that!"

"Things should now be English," insisted Caleb. "But you are too lazy, all of you, from the teacher down. You will be pretty much ashamed of yourselves this year, that I can tell you."

Katy was already halfway to the door, her black legs flying. She would waste no words on Caleb Stemmel. But now she turned and went back. Katy was curious.

"Why this year?"

"Because," teased Caleb.

"That is a dumb answer! Why *because?*"

"Because it is some one coming."

"Who?"

"A visitor." Caleb pronounced it "wisitor."

"Pooh! What do I care for a 'wisitor'?" mocked Katy.

"This is one that you care for!"

"Who is it?"

"Don't you wish you knew?"

Katy stamped her foot.

"If you don't tell, I'll throw you with snow when the snow comes," she threatened. Katy had respect for age in general, but not for Caleb Stemmel.

Caleb did not answer until he saw that Danny Koser was about to tell.

"It is a governor coming," he announced impressively.

Katy drew a step closer, her face aglow. No eyes of tanager or grosbeak could have shone blacker against brilliant plumage.

"Do you mean" — faltered Katy — "do you mean that my Uncle Daniel is coming home once, my Uncle Daniel Gaumer?"

"The squire was here and he told us." Danny

Koser was no longer to be restrained. "Then he went to your gran'pop. He got a letter, the squire did. What do you think of that now?"

"And what," jeered Caleb Stemmel, — "what will the governor think of Dutch Millerstown and the Dutch entertainment and Dutch Katy; what—"

Once more had Katy reached the door at the other end of the long room. She had a habit of forecasting her own actions; already she could see herself pounding at the teacher's door, then racing home to her grandfather's, her heart throbbing, throbbing, her whole being in the glow of excitement which she loved, and of which she never had enough.

Suddenly she stopped, her hand on the latch. She had a secret, the whole Millerstown school had a secret, but now it must be told. Every father and mother in Millerstown would have to know if the great project, really her great project, were to succeed. Since the news would have to come out, it might as well be announced at once.

"We are going to have an English entertainment, Caleb Stemmel," she cried. "It is planned this long time already; we have been practicing for a month, Caleb Stemmel. We will have you in it; we will have you say, 'A wery wenimous wiper jumped out of a winegar wat'; that will be fine for you, Caleb. Aha! Caleb!"

Outside Katy paused and stretched forth her arms. There was still not a soul in sight, there was still not a sound; she looked up the street and down and could see the last house at each end. Then Katy started to run. Ten minutes ago she had been only little Katy Gaumer, with lessons learned for the morrow and bedtime near, hating the quiet village, a good deal bored with life; now she was Katy Gaumer, the grandniece of one of the great men of the world.

"I wonder what he will look like," said Katy. "I want to do something. I want to be something. I want to make speeches. I want to be rich and learned. I want to do *everything*. If he would only help me, I might be *something*."

There was no one at hand to tell her that she was a vain child; no one to remind her that she was only one of twenty-odd grandnieces and nephews and that the governor of a Western State was after all not such an important person, since there were many still higher offices in the land. No Millerstonian would have so discounted Daniel Gaumer, who had made his own way and had achieved greater success than any of his Millerstown contemporaries. To Katy he was far more wonderful than the President of the United States. If she could do well at the entertainment — she, of course, had the longest and most important piece, and she had also drilled the other children — if it only turned out well, and if some one only said to the governor that success was due to her efforts, he might persuade her grandfather to send her away to school; he might —

But this was not the time to dream. With a fresh gasp for breath, Katy ran on and hurled herself against the teacher's door, or rather against the door of Sarah Ann Mohr, in whose house the teacher boarded. In an instant she was in the kitchen where Sarah Ann and the teacher sat together.

Sarah Ann was large and ponderous and good-natured. She was now reading the paper and hemming a gingham apron by turns. Sarah Ann loved to read. Her favorite matter was the inside page of the Millerstown "Star," which always offered varied and interesting items of general news. Sarah Ann was far less interested in the accounts of Millerstown's births and deaths and marriages than she was in the startling events of the world outside. Sarah Ann's taste inclined to the shocking and morbid. This evening she had read many times about a man who had committed suicide by sitting on a box of dynamite and lighting the fuse, and about a man whose head was gradually becoming like that of a lion. When she observed that the next item dealt with the remarkable invention of a young woman who baked glass in her husband's pies, Sarah Ann laid down the paper to compose her mind with a little sewing.

The teacher, who was small and slender and somewhat near-sighted, was going painstakingly over a bundle of civil service examination questions. He was only in Millerstown for a little while, acting as a substitute and waiting for something to turn up. He was a Pennsylvania German, but he would as soon have been called a Turk. He had changed his name from Schreiner to Carpenter and the very sound of his native tongue was hateful to him. He did not like Katy Gaumer; he did not like any young, active, springing things.

Now he listened to Katy in astonishment. Katy flung herself upon Sarah Ann.

"Booh! Don't look so scared. I will not eat you, Sarah Ann! And I am no spook! I am only in a hurry. Teacher, I have told the people about the English entertainment. It is out. I had to tell, because the children must know their pieces better. Ollie Kuhns, he won't learn his until his pop thrashes him a couple of times, and Jimmie Weygandt's mom will have to make him learn with a stick, and then he will not know it anyhow, perhaps, and they won't leave us have the Sunday School organ to practice beforehand for the singing unless they know why it is, and everybody must practice all the time from now on. You see, I *had* to tell."

The teacher looked at her dumbly. So did Sarah Ann.

"But *why?*" asked they together.

"Why?" repeated Katy, impatiently, as though they might have divined the wonderful reason. "Why, because my Uncle Daniel is coming. Is n't that enough?"

Sarah Ann laid down her apron.

"Bei meiner Seel'!" said she solemnly.

The teacher laid down his papers.

"The governor?" said he. He had heard of Governor Gaumer. He thought of the appointments in a governor's power; he foresaw at once escape from the teaching which he hated; he blessed Katy because she had proposed an English entertainment. He blessed her inspired suggestion of parental whippings for Ollie and Jimmie. "Sit down once, Katy, sit down."

It gave Katy another thrill of joy to be thus solicited by her enemy. But now she could not stop.

"I must go first home and see my folks. Then I will come back."

At the squire's gate, Bevy Schnepp awaited her.

"Ach, come once in a little, Katy!"

"I cannot!"

"Just a little! I have something for you." Bevy put out a futile arm. People were forever trying to catch Katy.

"No," laughed Katy. "I'll put a hex on you, Bevy! I'll bewitch you, Bevy!"

Katy was gone, through her grandfather's gate, down the brick walk under the pine trees to the kitchen where sat grandfather and grandmother and the squire. Seeing them together, the two old men with their broad shoulders and their handsome heads and the old woman with her kindly face, a stranger would have known at once where Katy got her active, erect figure and her curly hair and her dark eyes. All three were handsome; all three cultivated as far as their opportunities would allow;

all three would have been distinguished in a broader circle than Millerstown could offer. But here circumstances had placed them and had kept them. Even the squire, whose desk was frequently littered with time-tables, and who planned constantly journeys to the uttermost parts of the earth, had scarcely ever been away from Millerstown.

Upon these three Katy rushed like a whirlwind.

"Is it true?" she demanded breathlessly in the Pennsylvania German which the older folk loved, but which was falling into disuse among the young.

"Is what true?" asked grandfather and the squire together. They liked to tease Katy, everybody liked to tease Katy.

"That my uncle the governor is coming?"

"Yes," said Grandfather Gaumer. "Your uncle the governor is coming."

CHAPTER II

THE BELSNICKEL

On the afternoon of the entertainment there was an air of excitement, both within and without the schoolroom. Outside the clouds hung low; the winter wheat in the Weygandt fields seemed to have yielded up some of its brilliant green; there was no color on the mountain-side which had been warm brown and purple in the morning sunshine. A snowstorm was brewing, the first of the season, and Millerstown rejoiced, believing that a green Christmas makes a fat graveyard. But in spite of the threatening storm nearly all Millerstown moved toward the schoolhouse.

The schoolroom was almost unrecognizable. The walls were naturally a dingy brown, except where the blackboards made them still duller; the desks were far apart; the distance from the last row, where the ill-behaved liked to sit, to the teacher's desk, to which they made frequent trips for punishment, seemed on ordinary days interminable.

This afternoon, however, there was neither dullness nor extra space. The walls were hidden by masses of crowfoot and pine, brought from the mountain; the blackboards had vanished behind festoons of red flags and bunting. Into one quarter of the room the children were so closely crowded that one would have said they could never extricate themselves; into the other three quarters had squeezed and pressed their admiring relatives and friends.

Grandfather and Grandmother Gaumer were here, the latter with a large and mysterious basket, which she helped Katy to hide in the attic, the former laughing with his famous brother. The governor had come on the afternoon train, and Katy had scarcely dared to look at him. He was tall, — she could see that without looking, — and he had a deep, rich voice and a laugh which made one smile to hear it. "Mommy Bets" Eckert was here, a generation older than the Gaumer men, and dear, fat Sarah Ann Mohr, who would not have missed a Christmas entertainment for anything you could offer her. There were half a dozen babies who cooed and crowed by turns, and at them cross Caleb Stemmel frowned — Caleb was forever frowning; and there was Bevy Schnepp, moving about like a restless grasshopper, her bright, bead-like eyes on her beloved Katy.

"She is a fine platform speaker, Katy is," boasted Bevy to those nearest her. "She will beat them all."

Alvin Koehler, tall, slender, good-looking even to the eyes of older persons than Katy Gaumer, was an usher; his presence was made clear to Katy rather by a delicious thrill than by visual evidence. It went without saying that his crazy father had not come to the entertainment, though none of his small businesses of bricklaying, gardening, or bee culture need have kept him away. When Koehler was not at work, he spent no time attending entertainments; he sat at his door or window, watching the mountain road, and scolding and praying by turns.

Upon the last seat crouched David Hartman, sullen, frowning, as ever. The school entertainment was not worth the attention of so important a person as his father, and his mother could not have been persuaded to leave the constant toil with which she kept spotless her great, beautiful house.

Millerstown's young bachelor doctor had come, and he, too, watched Katy as she flew about in her scarlet dress. The doctor was a Gaumer on his mother's side, and from her had inherited the Gaumer good looks and the Gaumer brains. Katy's Uncle Edwin and her Aunt Sally had brought their little Adam, a beautiful, blond little boy, who had his piece to say on this great occasion. Uncle Edwin was a Gaumer without the Gaumer brains, but he had all the Gaumer kindness of heart. Of these two kinsfolk, Uncle Edwin and fat, placid Aunt Sally, Katy did not have a very high opinion. Smooth, pretty little Essie Hill had not come; her pious soul considered entertainments wicked.

But Katy gave no thought to Essie or to her absence; her mind was full of herself and of the great visitor and of Alvin Koehler. For Katy the play had begun. The governor was here; he looked kind and friendly; perhaps he would help her to carry out some of her great plans for the future. Since his coming had been announced, Katy had seen herself in a score of rôles. She would be a great teacher, she would be a fine lady, she would be a missionary to a place which she called "Africay." No position seemed beyond Katy's attainment in her present mood.

Katy knew her part as well as she knew her own name. It was called "Annie and Willie's Prayer." It was long and hard for a tongue, which, for all its making fun of other people, could not itself say *th* and *v* with ease. But Katy would not fail, nor would her little cousin Adam, still sitting close between his father and mother, whom she had taught to lisp through "Hang up the Baby's Stocking." If only Ollie Kuhns knew the "Psalm of Life," and Jimmie Weygandt, "There is a Reaper whose Name is Death," as well! When they began to practice, Ollie always said, "Wives of great men," and Jimmie always talked about "deas" for "death." But those faults had been diligently trained out of them. All the children had known their parts this morning; they had known them so well that Katy's elaborate test could not produce a single blunder, but would they know them now? Their faces grew whiter and whiter; the very pine branches seemed to quiver with nervousness; the teacher — Mr. Carpenter, indeed! — tried in vain to recall the English speech which he had written out and memorized. As he sat waiting for the time to open the entertainment, he frantically reminded himself that the prospect of examinations had always terrified him, but that he invariably recovered his wits with the first question.

Once he caught Katy Gaumer's eye and tried to smile. But Katy did not respond. Katy looked at him sternly, as though she were the teacher and he the pupil. She saw plainly enough what ailed him, and prickles of fright went up and down her backbone. His speech was to open the entertainment; if he failed, everybody would fail. Katy had seen panic sweep along the ranks of would-be orators in the Millerstown school before this. She had seen Jimmie Weygandt turn green and tremble like a leaf; she had heard Ellie Schindler cry. If the teacher would only let her begin the entertainment, she would not fail!

But the teacher did not call on Katy. No such simple way out of his difficulty occurred to his paralyzed brain. The Millerstonians expected the fine English entertainment to begin; the stillness in the room grew deathlike; the moments passed, and Mr. Carpenter sat helpless.

Then, suddenly, Mr. Carpenter jumped to his feet, gasping with relief. He knew what he would do! He would say nothing at all himself; he would call upon the stranger. It was perfectly true that precedent put a visitor's speech at the end of an entertainment, rather than at the beginning, but the teacher cared not a rap for precedent. The stranger should speak now, and thus set an example to the children. Hearing his easy *th's* and *v's*, they would have less trouble with their English. Color returned to the teacher's cheeks; only Katy Gaumer realized how terrified he had been. So elated was he that he introduced the speaker without stumbling.

"It is somebody here that we do not have often with us at such a time," announced Mr. Carpenter. "It is a governor here; he will make us a speech."

The governor rose, smiling, and Millerstown, smiling, also, craned its neck to see. Then Millerstown prepared itself to hear. What it heard, it could scarcely believe.

The governor had spoken for at least two minutes before his hearers realized anything but a sharp shock of surprise. The children looked and listened, and gradually their mouths opened; the fathers and mothers heard, and at once elbows sought neighboring sides in astonished nudges. Bevy Schnepp actually exclaimed aloud; Mr. Carpenter flushed a brilliant, apoplectic red. Only Katy Gaumer sat unmoved, being too much astonished to stir. She had looked at the stranger with awe; she regarded him now with incredulous amazement.

The governor had been away from Millerstown for thirty years; he was a graduate of a university; he had honorary degrees; the teacher had warned the children to look as though they understood him whether they understood him or not.

"If he asks you any English questions and you do not know what he means, I will prompt you a little," the teacher had promised. "You need only to look once a little at me."

But the distinguished stranger asked no difficult English questions; the distinguished stranger did not even speak English; he spoke his own native, unenlightened Pennsylvania German!

It came out so naturally, he seemed so like any other Millerstonian standing there, that they could hardly believe that he was distinguished and still less that he was a stranger. He said that he had not been in that schoolroom for thirty years, and that if any one had asked him its dimensions, he would have answered that it would be hard to throw a ball from one corner to the other. And now from where he stood he could almost touch its sides!

He remembered Caleb Stemmel and called him by name, and asked whether he had any little boys and girls there to speak pieces, at which everybody laughed. Caleb Stemmel was too selfish ever to have cared for anybody but himself.

Still talking as though he were sitting behind the stove in the store with Caleb and Danny Koser and the rest, the governor said suddenly an astonishing, an incredible, an appalling thing. Mr. Carpenter, already a good deal disgusted by the speaker's lack of taste, did not realize at first the purport of his statement, nor did the fathers and mothers, listening entranced. But Katy Gaumer heard! *He said that he had come a thousand miles to hear a Pennsylvania German Christmas entertainment!*

He said that it was necessary, of course, for every child to learn English, that it was the language of his fatherland; but that at Christmas time they should remember that they had an older fatherland, and that no nation felt the Christmas spirit like the Germans. It was a time when everybody should be grateful for his German blood, and should practice his German speech. He said that a man with two languages was twice a man. He had been looking forward to this entertainment for weeks; he had told his friends about it, and had made them curious and envious; he had thought about it on the long journey; he knew that there was one place where he could hear "Stille Nacht." He almost dared to hope that this entertainment would have a Belsnickel. If old men could be granted their dearest wish, they would be young again. This entertainment, he said, was going to make him young for one afternoon.

The great man sat down, and at once the little man arose. Mr. Carpenter did not pause as though he were frightened, he was no longer panic-stricken; he was, instead, furious, furious with himself for having called on Daniel Gaumer first, furious with Daniel Gaumer for thus upsetting his teaching. He said to himself that he did not care whether the children failed or not. He announced "Annie and Willie's Prayer."

It seemed for a moment as though Katy herself would fail. She stared into the teacher's eyes, and the teacher thought that she was crying. He could not have prompted her if his life had depended upon it. He glanced at the programme in his hand to see who was to follow Katy.

But Katy had begun. Katy's tears were those of emotion, not those of fright. She wore a red dress, her best, which was even redder than her everyday apparel; her eyes were bright, her cheeks flushed, she moved lightly; she felt as though all the world were listening, and as though — if her swelling heart did not choke her before she began — as though she might thrill the world. She knew how the stranger felt; this was one of the moments when she, too, loved Millerstown, and her native tongue and her own people. The governor had come back; this was his home; should he find it an alien place? No, Katy Gaumer would keep it home for him!

Katy bowed to the audience, she bowed to the teacher, she bowed to the stranger — she had effective, stagey ways; then she began. To the staring children, to the astonished fathers and mothers, to the delighted stranger, she recited a new piece. They had heard it all their lives, they could have recited it in concert. It was not "Annie and Willie's Prayer"; it was not even a Christmas piece; but it was as appropriate to the occasion as either. It was "Das alt Schulhaus an der Krick," and the translation compared with the original as the original Christmas entertainment compared with Katy Gaumer's.

"To-day it is just twenty years
  Since I began to roam;
Now, safely back, I stand once more,
Before the quaint old schoolhouse door,
  Close by my father's home."

Katy was perfectly self-possessed throughout; it must be confessed that praised and petted Katy was often surer of herself than a child should be. There were thirty-one stanzas in her recitation; there was time to look at each one in her audience. At the fathers and mothers she did not look at all; at Ollie Kuhns and Jimmie Weygandt and little Sarah Knerr, however, she looked hard and long. She was still staring at Ollie when she reached her desk, staring so hard that she scarcely heard the applause which the stranger led. She did not sit down gracefully, but hung halfway out of her seat, bracing herself with her arm round little Adam and still gazing at Ollie Kuhns. She had ceased to be an actor; she was now stage-manager.

The teacher failed to announce Ollie's speech, but no one noticed the omission. Ollie rose, grinning. This was a beautiful joke to him. He knew what Katy meant; he was always quick to understand. Katy was not the only bright child in Millerstown. He knew a piece entitled "Der Belsnickel," a description of the masked, fur-clad creature, the St. Nicholas with a pelt, who in Daniel Gaumer's day had brought cakes for good children and switches for the "nixnutzige." Ollie had terrified his schoolmates a hundred times with his representation of "Bosco, the Wild Man, Eats 'em Alive"; it would be a simple thing to make the audience see a fearful Belsnickel.

And little Sarah Knerr, did she not know "Das Krischkindel," which told of the divine Christmas spirit? She had learned it last year for a Sunday School entertainment; now, directed by Katy, she rose and repeated it with exquisite and gentle painstaking. When Sarah had finished, Katy went to the Sunday School organ, borrowed for the occasion, on which she had taught herself to play. There was, of course, only one thing to be sung, and that was "Stille Nacht." The children sang and their fathers and mothers sang, and the stranger led them all with his strong voice.

Only Katy Gaumer, fixing one after the other of the remaining performers with her eye, sang no more after the tune was started. There was Coonie Schnable; she said to herself that he would fail in whatever he tried to say. It would make little difference whether Coonie's few unintelligible words were English or German. Coonie had always been the clown of the entertainments of the Millerstown school; he would be of this one, also.

But Coonie did not fail. Ellie Schindler recited a German description of "The County Fair" without a break; then Coonie Schnable rose. He had once "helped" successfully in a dialogue. For those who know no Pennsylvania German it must suffice that the dialogue was a translation of a scene in "Hamlet." For the benefit of those who are more fortunate, a translation is appended. Coonie recited all the parts, and also the names of the speakers.

Hamlet: Oh, du armes Schpook!
Ghost: Pity mich net, aber geb mir now dei' Ohre,
For ich will dir amohl eppas sawga.
Hamlet: Schwets rous, for ich will es now aw hera.
Ghost: Und wann du heresht, don nemhst aw satisfaction.
Hamlet: Well was is's? Rous mit!
Ghost: Ich bin dei'm Dawdy sei' Schpook!

To the children Coonie's least word and slightest motion were convulsing; now they shrieked with glee, and their fathers and mothers with them. The stranger seemed to discover still deeper springs of mirth; he laughed until he cried.

Only Katy, stealing out, was not there to see the end. Nor was she at hand to speed little Adam, who was to close the entertainment with "Hang up the Baby's Stocking." But little Adam had had his whispered instructions. He knew no German recitation — this was his first essay at speech-making — but he knew a German Bible verse which his Grandmother Gaumer had taught him, "Ehre sei Gott in der Höhe, und Friede auf Erden, und Den Menschen ein Wohlgefallen." (Glory to God in the Highest and on earth, peace, good will toward men.) He looked like a Christmas spirit as he said it, with his flaxen hair and his blue eyes, as the stranger might have looked sixty years ago. Daniel Gaumer started the applause, and as little Adam passed him, lifted him to his knee.

It is not like the Millerstonians to have any entertainment without refreshments, and for this entertainment refreshments had been provided. Grandmother Gaumer's basket was filled to the brim with cookies, ginger-cakes, sand-tarts, flapjacks, in all forms of bird and beast and fish, and these Katy went to the attic to fetch. She ran up the steps; she had other and more exciting plans than the mere distribution of the treat.

In the attic, by the window, sullen, withdrawn as usual, sat David Hartman.

"You must get out of here," ordered Katy in her lordly way. "I have something to do here, and you must go quickly. You ought to be ashamed to sit here alone. You are always ugly. Perhaps" — this both of them knew was flippant nonsense — "perhaps you have been after my cakes!"

David made no answer; he only looked at her from under his frowning brows, then shambled down the steps and out the door into the cold, gray afternoon. Let him take his sullenness and meanness away! Then Katy's bright eyes began to search the room.

In another moment, down in the schoolroom, little Adam cried out and hid his face against the stranger's breast; then another child screamed in excited rapture. The Belsnickel had come! It was covered with the dust of the schoolhouse attic; it was not of the traditional huge size — it was, indeed, less than five feet tall; but it wore a furry coat — the distinguished stranger leaped to his feet, saying that it was not possible that that old pelt still survived! — it opened its mouth "like scissors," as Ollie Kuhns's piece had said. It had not the traditional bag, but it had a basket, Grandmother Gaumer's, and the traditional cakes were there. It climbed upon a desk, its black-stockinged legs and red dress showing through the rents of the old, ragged coat, and the children surrounded it, laughing, begging, screaming with delight.

The stranger stood and looked at Katy. He did not yet realize how large a part she had had in the entertainment, though about that a proud grandfather would soon inform him; he saw the Gaumer eyes and the Gaumer bright face, and he remembered with sharp pain the eyes of a little sister gone fifty years ago.

"Who is that child?" he asked.

Katy's grandfather called her to him, and she came slowly, slipping like a crimson butterfly from the old coat, which the other children seized upon with joy. She heard the governor's question and her grandfather's answer.

"It is my Abner's only child."

Then Katy's eyes met the stranger's bright gaze. She halted in the middle of the room, as though she did not know exactly what she was doing. Their praise embarrassed her, her foolish anger at David

Hartman hurt her, her head swam. Even her joy seemed to smother her. This great man had hated Millerstown, as she hated Millerstown, sometimes, or he would not have gone away; he had loved it as she did, or he would not have come back to laugh and weep with his old friends. Perhaps he, too, had wanted everything and had not known how to get it; perhaps he, too, had wanted to fly and had not known where to find wings! A consciousness of his friendliness, of his kinship, seized upon her. He would understand her, help her! And like the child she was, Katy ran to him. Indeed, he understood even now, for stooping to kiss her, he hid her foolish tears from Millerstown.

CHAPTER III

THE GREAT MAN

On ordinary Christmas days, when only the squire and the doctor and Uncle Edwin and Aunt Sally and little Adam and Bevy Schnepp dined at Grandfather Gaumer's, Grandmother Gaumer and Bevy prepared a fairly elaborate feast. There was always a turkey, a twenty-five pounder with potato filling, there were all procurable vegetables, there were always cakes and pies and preserves and jellies without number. One gave one's self up with cheerful helplessness to indigestion, one resigned one's self to next day's headache — that is, if one were not a Gaumer. No Gaumer ever had headache.

It cannot be claimed for Katy that she was of much assistance to her elders on this Christmas Day, tall girl though she was. Grandfather Gaumer and the governor started soon after breakfast to pay calls in the village and her thoughts were with them. How glad every one would be to see the governor; how they would press cakes and candy upon him; how he would joke with them; how they would treasure what he said! What a wonderful thing it was to be famous and to have every one admire you!

"I would keep the chair he sat in," said Katy. "I would put it away and keep it."

Presently Katy saw Katy Gaumer coming back to her native Millerstown, covered with honors, of what sort Katy did not exactly know, and going about on Christmas morning to see the Millerstown Christmas trees and to receive the homage of a delighted community.

Meanwhile, Katy tripped over her own feet and sent a dish flying from the kitchen table, and started to fill the teakettle from the milk-pitcher. Finally, to Bevy Schnepp's disgust, Katy spilled the salt. Bevy was as much one of the party as the governor. She moved swiftly about, her little face twisted into a knot, profoundly conscious of the importance of her position as assistant to the chief cook on this great day, her shrill voice now breathing forth commands, now recounting strange tales. Grandmother Gaumer, to whose kitchen Bevy was a thrice daily visitor, had long ago accustomed herself not to listen to the flow of speech, and had thereby probably saved her own reason.

"You fetch me hurry a few coals, Katy. Now don't load yourself down so you cannot walk! 'The more haste the less speed!' Adam, you take your feet to yourself or they will get stepped on for sure. Gran'mom, your pies! You better get them out or they burn to nothing! Go in where the Putz is, Adam, then you are not all the time under the folks' feet. Sally Edwin, you peel a few more potatoes for me, will you, Sally, for the mashed potatoes? Mashed potatoes go down like nothing. Ach, I had the worst time with my supper yesterday! The chicken would n't get, and the governor was there. I tell you, the Old Rip was in it! But I carried the pan three times round the house and then it done fine for me. Katy, if you take another piece of celery, I'll teach you the meaning. To eat my nice celery that I cleaned for dinner! And the hard, yet! If you want celery, fetch some for yourself and clean it and eat it. I'd be ashamed, Katy, a big girl like you! You want to be so high gelernt, you think you are a platform speaker, yet you would eat celery out of the plate. Look out, the salt, Katy! Well, Katy! Would you spill the salt, yet! Do you want to put a hex on everything? I — "

"Bevy!" Katie exploded with alarm.

"What is it?" cried Bevy.

"Your mouth is open!"

"I — I — " Bevy gurgled, then gasped. Bevy was not slow on the uptake. "I opened it, I opened it a-purpose to tell you what I think of you. I — "

But Katy, hearing an opening door, had gone, dancing into the sitting-room, where, on great days like this, the feast was spread. The room was larger than the kitchen; in the center stood the long table, and in one corner was the Christmas tree with the elaborate "Putz," a garden in which miniature sheep and cows walked through forests and swans swam on glass lakelets. Before the "Putz," entranced, sat fat Adam; near by, beside the shiny "double-burner," the governor and his brothers and young Dr. Benner were establishing themselves. The governor had still a hundred questions to ask.

Katy perched herself on the arm of her grandfather's chair, saying to herself that Bevy might call forever now and she would not answer. The odor of roasting turkey filled the house, intoxicating the souls of hungry men, but it was not half so potent as this breath of power, this atmosphere of the great world of affairs, which surrounded Great-Uncle Gaumer. Katy's heart thumped as she listened; the great, vague plans which she had made in the night seemed at one moment possible of execution, at the next absolutely mad. Her face flushed and her skin pricked as she thought of making known her desires; her heart seemed to sink far below its proper resting-place. She listened to the governor with round, excited eyes, now praying for courage, now yielding to despair.

The governor's questions did not refer to the great world, — it seemed as though the world had become of no account to him, — but to Millerstown, the Millerstown of his youth, of apple-butter matches, of raffles, of battalions, of the passing through of troops to the war, of the rough preachers of a stirring age. He remembered many things which his brothers had forgotten; they and the younger folk listened entranced. As for Bevy, moving about on tiptoe, so as not to miss a word, — it was a marvel that she was able to finish the dinner.

"He traveled on horseback," said the governor. "He had nothing to his name in all the world but his horse and his old saddlebags, and he visited the people whether they wanted him or not. At our house he was always welcome, — he stayed once a whole winter, — and on Sundays he used to give it to us in church, I can tell you! Everything he'd yell out that would come into his mind. One Sunday he yelled at me, 'There you stand in the choir, and you could n't get a pig's bristle between your teeth. Sing out, Daniel!'

"But he could preach powerfully! He made the people listen! There was no sleeping in the church when he was in the pulpit. If the young people did not pay attention, he called right out, 'John, behave! Susy, look at me!'"

"We have such a preacher here," said Uncle Edwin in his slow way. "He is a Improved New Mennonite. He — "

"They wear hats with Scripture on them, and they sing, 'If you love your mother, keep her in the sky,'" interrupted Katy.

"'*Meet* her in the sky,'" corrected Grandmother Gaumer. "That has some sense to it."

"He won't read the words as they are written in the Bible," went on Uncle Edwin, apparently not minding the interruption. He shared with the rest of Katy's kin their foolish opinion of Katy. "He says the words that are printed fine don't belong there, they are put in. It is like riding on a bad road, his reading. It goes bump, bump. It sounds very funny."

"He preaches on queer texts," said Katy. "He preached on 'She Fell in Love with her Mother-in-Law.'"

"Now, Katy!" admonished Grandmother Gaumer.

Bevy Schnepp had endured as much as she could of insult to the denomination to which she belonged and to the preacher under whom she sat.

"Your Lutheran preachers have 'kein Saft und kein Kraft, kein Salz und kein Peffer' [no sap and no strength, no salt and no pepper]," she quoted. "They are me too leppish [insipid]. You must give these things a spiritual meaning. It meant Naomi and Ruth."

The governor smiled his approval at Bevy. "Right you are, Bevy!" Then he began to ask questions about his former acquaintances.

"What has come over John Hartman?"

"While he is so cross, you mean?" said Grandfather Gaumer. "I don't know what has come over him. It is a strange thing. He is so long queer that we forget he was ever any other way."

"Was he ugly this morning?" asked Grandmother Gaumer.

"He did n't ask us to come in and she did n't come to the door at all."

Bevy Schnepp, entering with laden hands, made sharp comment.

"She is afraid her things will get spoiled if the sun or the moon or the cold air strikes them. She is crazy for cleanness. She will get yet like fat Abby. Fat Abby once washed her hands fifteen times before breakfast, and if he (her husband) touched the coffee-pot even to push it back with his finger if it was boiling over, then she would make fresh."

"And do the Koehlers still live on the mountain?"

"There are only two Koehlers left," answered the squire, "William and his boy." The squire shook his head solemnly. "It is a queer thing about the Koehlers, too. The others were honest and right in their minds, but William, he is none of these things."

"Not *honest!*" said the governor.

"About fifteen years ago he did some bricklaying at the church and he had the key of the communion cupboard. The solid service was there and while he was working it disappeared."

"Disappeared!" repeated the governor. "You mean he took it? What could he do with it?"

"I don't know. Nobody knows. He goes about muttering and praying over it. They say his boy hardly gets enough to eat. I can't understand it."

"He!" Bevy now had the great turkey platter in her arms; its weight and her desire to express herself made her gasp. "He! He looks at a penny till it is a twenty-dollar gold-piece. And you ought to see his boy! He is for all the world like a girl. 'Like father, like son!' He'll do something, too, yet."

Katy slid from the arm of her grandfather's chair, her cheeks aflame.

"You have to look at pennies when you are poor," she protested. "You can't throw money round when you don't have it!"

Bevy slid the platter gently to its place on the table, then she faced about.

"Now, listen once!" cried she with admiration. "You can't throw money round when you don't have it, can't you? What do you know about it, you little chicken?"

Katy's face flushed a deeper crimson. If looks could have slain, Bevy would have dropped. Young Dr. Benner turned and looked at Katy suddenly and curiously. She would have gone on expostulating had not Grandmother Gaumer risen and the other Gaumers with her, all moving with one accord toward the feast. There was time only for a secret and threatening gesture toward Bevy, then Katy bent her head with the rest.

"'The eyes of all wait upon Thee,'" said Grandfather Gaumer in German. "'Thou givest them their meat in due season.'"

Heartily the Gaumers began upon the Christmas feast, the feast beside which the ordinary Christmas dinner was so poor and simple a thing. Here was the turkey, done to a turn, here were all possible vegetables, all possible pies and cakes and preserves. To these Grandmother Gaumer had added a few common side-dishes, so that her brother-in-law might not return to the West without a taste, at least, of all the staple foods of his childhood. There was a slice of home-raised, home-cured ham; there was a piece of smoked sausage; there was a dish of Sauerkraut and a dish of "Schnitz und Knöpf," — these last because the governor had mentioned them yesterday in his speech. It was well that the squire lived next door and that Bevy had her own stove to use as well as Grandmother Gaumer's.

Bevy occupied the chair nearest the kitchen door. There are few class distinctions in Millerstown, though one is not expected to leave the station in life in which he was born. It was proper for Bevy to occupy the position of maid and for little Katy to go to school. If Katy had undertaken to live out, or Bevy to become learned, Millerstown would have disapproved of both of them. When each remained in her place, they were equal.

The governor tasted all the dishes serenely, and Grandmother Gaumer apologized from beginning to end, as is polite in Millerstown. The turkey might have been heavier — if he had, he would certainly have perished long before Grandfather's axe was sharpened for him! The pie might have been flakier, the sausage might have been smoked a bit longer — it would have been sinful to add a breath of smoke to what was already perfect.

"And then it would n't have been ready for today!" said the governor.

"But we might have begun earlier." Grandmother Gaumer would not yield her point. "If we had butchered two days earlier, it would have been better."

When human power could do no more, when Bevy had no more breath for urgings, such as, "Ach, eat it up once, so it gets away!" or "Ach, finish it; it stood round long enough already!" the Gaumers pushed back their chairs and talked with mellower wit and softer hearts of old times, of father and mother and grandparents, and of the little sister who had died.

"She was just thirteen," said Governor Gaumer. "She was the liveliest little girl! I often think if she had lived, she would have made of herself something different from the other people in Millerstown. But now she would have been an old woman, think of that!" The governor held out his hand and Katy came across to him, her eyes filled with tears. Katy was always easily moved. "Did n't she look like this one?"

"Yes," agreed Grandfather Gaumer. "That I always said."

The governor laid both his hands on Katy's shoulders.

"And what" — said he, — "what are you going to do in this world, Miss Katy?"

Katy looked up at him with a deep, deep breath. She had thought that yesterday held a great moment, but here was a much greater one. She clasped her hands, she gasped again, she looked the governor straight in the face. Here was her opportunity, the opportunity which she had begun to think would never come.

"Ach," said Katy with a deep sigh, "when I am through the Millerstown school, I should like to go to a big school and learn *everything!*"

The governor smiled upon her.

"Everything, Katy!"

"Yes," sighed Katy.

"Listen to her once!" cried Bevy Schnepp with pride.

"Can't you learn enough here?"

"I am already in the next to the highest class," explained Katy. "And our teacher, he is not a very good one. He wants to be English and a teacher ought to be English, but he is werry Germaner than the scholars. He said to us in school, 'We are to have nothing but English here, *do you versteh?*' That is exactly the way he said it to us. He says lots of words that are not English. I want to be English. I—"

"Just listen now!" cried Bevy again, her hands piled high with dishes.

"I want to be well educated," finished Katy with glowing cheeks.

"And what would you do when you were educated?" asked the governor.

"I would leave Millerstown," said Katy.

"Why?" asked the governor.

"It would be no use having an education in Millerstown," answered Katy with conviction. "You have no idea how slow Millerstown is."

"And where did you think you would go?"

"Perhaps to Phildel'phy," answered Katy. "Perhaps I would be a missionary to Africay."

Strange sounds issued from the throats of Katy's kin.

"You are sure you could do nothing in Millerstown with an education?" asked the governor.

"It is nothing to do here," explained Katy. "You can walk round Millerstown a whole evening and you don't hear anything and you don't see anything."

"Would she like *murders?*" demanded Bevy Schnepp.

"You go in the store and Caleb Stemmel and Danny Koser are too dumb and lazy even to read the paper, and Sarah Ann Mohr is hemming and everybody else is sleeping. The married people sit round and don't say anything, and — "

"Do you want them to *fight?*" Bevy was not discouraged by being ignored.

"You think it would be better to be a missionary?" said the governor.

"It would be better to be *anything*," declared Katy fervently. "I *cannot stand* Millerstown!" Katy clasped her hands and looked into the face of her distinguished relative. "Oh, please, please make them send me away to a big school! I prayed for it!" added Katy.

Over Katy's head the eyes of her elders met. The older folk thought of the little girl who might have been something different, the squire remembered the journeys he had planned in his youth and the years he had waited to take them.

But to Katy's chagrin and bitter disappointment, no one said another word about an education. Grandmother Gaumer suggested that Katy might help Aunt Sally and Bevy with the dishes. Afterwards, Katy was called upon to say her piece once more. When little Adam followed with his Bible verse and was given equal praise, Katy's poor heart, sinking lower and lower, reached the most depressed position which it is possible for a heart to assume. Her cause was lost.

Then the governor prepared to start on his long journey to the West. There he had grown sons and daughters and little grandchildren whom these Eastern cousins might never see. He kissed Grandmother Gaumer and his niece Sally and little Adam and Katy, and shook hands with Bevy Schnepp, then he returned and kissed Grandmother Gaumer once more. There was something solemn in his farewell; at sight of Grandmother Gaumer's face Katy was keenly conscious once more of her own despair. From the window she watched the three old men go down the street, the famous man who had gone away from Millerstown and the two who had stayed. It seemed to Katy that the two were less noble because of the obscurity of their lives.

"Why did gran'pop stay here always?" she asked when she and her grandmother were alone. "Why did uncle go away?"

"Gran'pop was the oldest, and he and the squire had to stay here. Uncle had the chance to go."

"But — " Katy crossed to her grandmother's side. Everything was still in the warm, pine-scented room. "But, grandmother, why do you cry?"

"I am not crying," said grandmother brightly.

"But you look — you look as if" — Katy struggled for words in which to express her thoughts — "as if everything were finished!"

Grandmother sighed gently. "I am an old woman, Katy, and your uncle is an old man. We may never see each other again."

"Oh, dear! oh, dear!" cried Katy. "This is a very sad Christmas!"

It was not the sadness of parting which made Katy cry. It was unthinkable that anything should change for her. Everything would be the same, always — alas, that it should be so! She, Katy Gaumer, with all her smartness in school, and all her ability to plan and manage entertainments, would stay here in this spot until she died. Grandmother Gaumer, reproaching herself, comforted her for that which was not a grief at all.

"We will be here a long time yet. And you are to go away to school, and — "

Katy sprang to her feet.

"Who says it, gran'mom? Who says I dare go to school?"

"Your gran'pop said it, and your uncles said it when you were out with Bevy. You are to study here till you are through with the highest class, then you are to go away. Your uncle will find a school: he will send us catalogues and he will give us advice."

Katy clasped her hands.

"I do not deserve it!"

"You said you prayed for it," reminded Grandmother Gaumer.

"But I prayed without faith," confessed Katy. "I did not believe for one little minute it would ever come true in this world!"

"Well," said Grandmother Gaumer, "it is coming true."

Here for once was bliss without alloy, here was a rapture without reaction. Christmas entertainments, at which one did well, ended; there was no outlook from them, and it was the same with perfect recitations in school. But this was different. One had the moment's complete joy, one had also something much better.

"I must study," planned Katy. "I must learn. I must make" — alas, that one's joy should be another's bitter trial! — "I must make that teacher learn me everything he knows!"

It was dusk when Grandfather Gaumer came home.

"I told Katy," said Grandmother Gaumer.

"Daniel gave me two hundred dollars to put in the bank in Katy's name," announced Grandfather Gaumer solemnly. "It shall be spent for books and to start Katy. He and the squire and I will see her through."

Katy flung herself upon her grandfather.

"I will learn everything," she promised. "I will make you proud of me. Like it says in the Sunday School book, 'I will bring home my sheaves.' And now," said Katy, "I am going to run out to the schoolhouse and back."

In an instant she was gone, scarlet shawl about her, slamming the door. Perhaps the two old people sitting together were not sorry to have her away for a while. The day with its memories and its parting had been hard, and the mere youthfulness of youth is sometimes difficult for age to bear.

"Her legs fly like the arms of a windmill," said Grandfather Gaumer.

Then they sat silently together.

Already Katy was halfway out to the schoolhouse. The threatened snow had fallen and the sky had cleared at sunset. There was still a faint, rosy glow in the west, a glow which was presently dimmed by the brighter light which spread over the landscape as the cinder ladle at the furnace turned out its fiery charge upon the cinder bank. When that flame faded, the stars were shining brightly; Katy stood in the road before the schoolhouse and looked up at them and then round about her. The schoolhouse, glorified by her recent triumph, was further sanctified by her great hopes. Beside it on the hillside stood the little church, where she had been confirmed and had had her first communion, where during the long German sermons she had dreamed many dreams, and where she had been thrilled by solemn watch-night services. Millerstown was not without power to impress itself even upon one who hated it.

Now Katy raced down the hill. But she was not ready to go into the house. She shrieked into Bevy Schnepp's kitchen window; she almost upset Caleb Stemmel as he plodded to his place behind the stove in the store, wishing that there were no Christmases; she ran once more to the end of Locust Street and across to Church Street and looked through the thick trees at the Hartman house. David had surely some handsome Christmas gifts from his parents. Then, straining her eyes, she gazed up at the little white house on the mountain-side. There was not much Christmas there, that was certain, but Alvin was there, handsome, adorable. Alvin would pay heed to her if she was going away, the one person in Millerstown to be educated!

Then Katy stretched out her arms.

"Oh, dear Millerstown!" cried Katy. "Oh, dear, dumb Millerstown, I am going away from you!"

CHAPTER IV

THE KOEHLERS' CHRISTMAS DAY

At Grandfather Gaumer's house, where the governor dined; at the Weygandt farm where there was another great family dinner; at the Kuhnses, where Ollie still swelled proudly over yesterday's oratorical triumph; at Sarah Ann Mohr's, where ten indigent guests filled themselves full of fat duck, — indeed, one might say at every house in Millerstown, there was feasting. The very air smelled of roasting and boiling and frying, and the birds passing overhead stopped and settled hopefully on trees and roofs.

But in the house of William Koehler, just above Millerstown on the mountain road, there was no turkey or goose done to a turn, there were no pies, there was no fine-cake. Here was no mother or grandmother to make preserves or to compound mincemeat in preparation for this day of days. What mother there had been was seldom thought of in the little house.

Here the day passed like any other day, except that it was duller and less tolerable. There was no school for Alvin and no work for his father, and they had to spend the long hours together. Alvin did not like school, but to-day he would cheerfully have gone before daylight and have remained until dark. His father did not like holidays; they removed the goal, for which he worked and of which he thought night and day, a little farther away from him. He would have preferred to work every day, even on Sundays.

William was a mason by trade, but when there was no mason work for him, he was willing to turn his hand to anything which would bring him a little money. Another mason had recently established himself in the village, urged, it was supposed, by those who were unwilling to admit Koehler to their houses for the occasional bits of plastering which had to be done. There was no question that Koehler was very queer. Not only was he likely to kneel down at any moment and begin to pray, but he did other singular things. He had once worked until two o'clock in the afternoon without his dinner, because his watch had stopped and he had not sense enough to know it. It was not strange that thrifty Millerstown agreed that he was not a safe person to have about.

Between him and his son there was little sympathy; there was, indeed, seldom speech. Alvin was bitterly ashamed of his father, of his miserly ways, of his shabby clothes, and above all, of his insane habit of praying. William prayed incoherently about the communion service which he was supposed to have stolen — at least, that was what seemed to be the burden of his petition. Whether he prayed for grace to return it, or for forgiveness for having taken it, Millerstown did not know, so confused was his speech. Alvin's position was a hard one. He was humiliated by the taunts of the Millerstown boys; he hated the poverty of his life; he was certain that never had human being been so miserable.

Early on Christmas morning the two had had their breakfast together in the kitchen of the little white house where they lived, and there Alvin had made an astonishing request. Alvin was fond of fine clothes; there was a certain red tie in the village store at which he had looked longingly for days. Alvin was given to picturing himself, as Katy Gaumer pictured herself, in conspicuous and important positions in the eyes of men. Alvin's coveted distinction, however, was of fine apparel, and not of superior education. He liked to be clean and tidy; he disliked rough play and rough work which disarranged his clothes and soiled his hands.

"Ach, pop," he begged, "give me a Christmas present!" His eyes filled with tears, he had been cruelly disappointed because he had found no way to get the tie in time for the Christmas entertainment. "Everybody has a Christmas present!"

"A Christmas present!" repeated William Koehler, his quick, darting eyes shining with amazement. His were not mean features; he had the mouth of a generous man, and his eyes were full and round. But between his brows lay a deep depression, as though experience had moulded his forehead into a shape for which nature had not intended it. If it had not been for that deep wrinkle, one would have said that he was a gentle, kindly, humorous soul. "A Christmas present!" said he again.

Without making any further answer, he rose and went out the kitchen door and down the board walk toward the chicken house. He repeated the monstrous request again and again, like a person of simple mind.

"A Christmas present! He asks me for a Christmas present!"

When he reached the chicken house, he stood still, leaning against the fence. The chickens clustered about him with crowings and squawkings, some flying to his shoulders. Birds and beasts and insects loved and trusted poor William if human beings did not. It was possible for him to go about among his bees and handle them as he would without fear of stings.

Now he paid no heed to the flapping, eager fowl, except to thrust them away from him. He stood leaning against the fence and looking down upon the gray landscape. It was not yet quite daylight and the morning was cloudy. The depression in his forehead deepened; he was looking fixedly at one spot, John Hartman's house, as though he had never seen it before, or as though he meant to fix it in his mind forever.

The Hartman house was always there. He had seen it a thousand times, would see it a thousand times more. On moonlight nights, its wide roofs glittered, on dark nights a gleaming lamp set on a post before the door fixed it in place. In winter its light and its great bulk, in summer its girdle of trees, distinguished it from all the other houses in Millerstown. William Koehler could see it from every foot of his little house and garden. It was before his eyes when he worked among his plants, which seemed to love him also, and when he sat for a few minutes on his porch, and when he tended his bees or fed his chickens.

Beyond the Hartman house he did not look. There the country spread out in a wide, cultivated, varicolored plain, with the mountains bounding it far away. To the right of the village was the little cemetery where his wife lay buried, and near it the Lutheran church to which they had both belonged, but he glanced at neither. Sometimes he could see John Hartman helping his wife from the carriage when they returned from church, or stamping the snow from his feet before he stepped into his buggy in the stable yard. Often, at this sight, when there was no one within hearing, William waved his arms and shouted, as though nothing but a wild sound could express his emotion. He was not entirely free from the superstitions in which Bevy and many other Millerstonians believed, superstitions long since seared upon the souls of a persecuted generation in the fatherland. He recited the strange verse, supposed to ward away evil, —

"Dulix, ix, ux,
Thou comest not over Pontio,
Pontio is over Pilato!" —

and he carried about with him a little spray of five-finger grass as a charm.

When John Hartman drove along the mountain road, his broad shoulders almost filling his buggy, William had more than once shouted an insane accusation at him. This Millerstown did not know. Koehler never spoke thus unless they were alone, and Hartman told no one of the encounter. One is not likely to tell the world that he has been accused of stealing, even though the accuser is himself known to be a madman and a thief. But John Hartman came presently to avoid the mountain road.

After a while William roused himself and fed his chickens and looked once more at the house of John Hartman. There was smoke rising from the chimney, and tears came into William's eyes, as though the smoke had drifted across the fields and had blinded him. Suddenly he struck the sharp paling a blow with his hard hand and spoke aloud, not with his usual faltering and mumbling tongue, but clearly and straightforwardly. William had found a help and a defense.

"I will tell him!" cried he. "This day I will tell my son, Alvin!"

All the long, snowy Christmas morning, Alvin sat about the house. He did not read because he had no books, and besides, he did not care much for books. Alvin was a very handsome boy, but he did not have much mind. He did not sing or whistle on this Christmas morning because he was not cheerful; he did not whittle because whittling would have wasted both knife and stick, and his father would have reproved him. He did not walk out because he was not an active boy like David Hartman, and he did not visit because he was not liked in Millerstown. He did not take a boy's part in the games; he was afraid to swim and dive; he whined when he was hurt.

He looked out the window toward the Hartman house with a vague envy of David, who had so much while he had so little. He watched his father's parsimonious preparation of the simple meal — how Grandmother Gaumer and Bevy Schnepp would have exclaimed at a Christmas dinner of butcher's ham!

"Oh, the poor souls!" Grandmother Gaumer would have cried. "I might easily have invited them to us to eat!"

"Where does the money go, then?" Bevy would have demanded. "He surely earns enough to have anyhow a chicken on Christmas! Where does he put his money? No sugar in the coffee! Just potatoes fried in ham fat for vegetables!"

All the long afternoon, also, Alvin sat about the house. He did not think again of the Hartmans; he did not think of Katy Gaumer, who thought so frequently of him; he thought of the red tie and wished that he had money to buy it.

All the long afternoon his father huddled close to the other side of the stove and muttered to himself as though he were preparing whatever he meant to tell Alvin. It must be either a very puzzling or a very long story, or one which required careful rehearsing. When the sun, setting in a clear sky, had touched the top of a mountain far across the plain, he began to speak suddenly, as though he had given to himself the departure of day for a signal. He did not make an elaborate account of the strange events he had to relate; on the contrary, he could hardly have omitted a word and have had his meaning clear. He said little of Alvin's mother; he drew no deductions; he simply told the story.

"Alvin!" cried he, sharply.

Alvin looked up. His head had sunk on his breast; he was at this moment half asleep. He was startled not alone by the tone of his father's voice, but by his father's straightened shoulders, by his piercing glance.

"I am going to tell you something!"

Alvin looked at his father a little eagerly. Perhaps his father was going to give him a present, after all. It would take only a quarter to buy the red tie. But it was a very different announcement which William had to make. He began with an alarming statement.

"After school closes you are to work at the furnace. I let you do nothing too long already, Alvin!"

"At the furnace!" Alvin's astonishment and alarm made him cry out. He hated the sight of Oliver Kuhns and Billy Knerr when they came home all grimy and black.

"I will tell you something," said his father again. "Listen good, Alvin!"

Alvin needed no such command to make him hearken. Alvin had not much will, but he was determining with all his power that he would never, never work in the furnace. He did not observe how his father's cheeks had paled above his black beard, and how steadily he kept his eyes upon his son. The story William had to tell was not that of a man whose mind was gone.

"You know the church?" said William.

"Of course."

"I mean the Lutheran church where I used to go, where my pop went."

"Yes."

"You go in at the front of the church, but the pulpit is at the other end. There were once long ago two windows, one on each side of the pulpit. They went almost down to the floor. From there the sun shone in the people's eyes. You can't remember that, Alvin. That was before your time."

Alvin sat still, sullenly. This conversation was, after all, only of a piece with his father's strange mutterings; it had to do with no red necktie.

"But now the Sunday School is there and those windows are gone this long time. One is a door into the Sunday School, the other is a wall. I built that wall, Alvin."

William paused as though for some comment, but Alvin said nothing.

"I was sitting where I am sitting now one evening and she [his wife] was sitting where you are sitting and you were running round, and the preacher climbed the hill to us and he came in and he said to me, 'William,' he said, 'it is decided that the big window is to be walled up. When can you do it?' That was the way he said it, Alvin. I said to him, 'I can do it to-morrow. I had other work for the afternoon at Zion Church, but I can put it off.' She could have told you that that was just what he said and what I said. I was in the congregation and there was at that time no other mason but me in Millerstown. It was to be made all smooth, so that nobody could ever tell there was a window there. Then the preacher, he said to me, — she could tell you that, too, if she were here, — he said, 'Come in the morning and I will give you the key of the communion cupboard,' the little cupboard in the wall, Alvin. There the communion set was kept. It was silver, real silver, all shiny." William's hands began to tremble and he moistened his dry lips. William spoke of objects which were to him manifestly holy. His son bent his head now, not idly and indifferently, but stubbornly. He remembered the names which the boys had shouted at his father; with all his soul he recoiled from hearing his father's confession. "There was a silver pitcher, so high, and a silver plate and a silver cup on a stem like a goblet. The preacher put it away there and he locked the door always.

"But he gave me the key and I went to my work. I thought once I would have to open the door and I stuck the key in the lock. It was a funny key.

"But I did n't need to open the door. I took my dinner along — she could tell you that. But I did n't need to open the door, and I took the key out again and put it in my pocket, and when I finished I swept everything up nice and locked the church door and came down the pike. It was night already and I went to the preacher and gave him the two keys, the church key and the other, and got my money. That quick he paid me, Alvin. He said to me, 'Well, I guess you had a quiet day, William,' and I said, 'Yes, nobody looked in at me but a little one.' That is what I said to the preacher *then*, Alvin, exactly that, but it was not true. But I thought it was true.

"Then I came home and I told her how nice and smooth I had made it — to this day, you cannot see it was a window there. Now, listen, Alvin!"

The sunset sky was darkening, a rising wind rattled the door in its latch. The little house was lonely on a winter night, even a bright night like this. The boy began to be frightened, his father looked at him with such dagger-like keenness.

"So it went for three weeks, Alvin, and then it was Sunday morning and here I sat and there she sat and you were running round, and it came a knock at the door and there was the preacher. I was studying my lesson for the Sunday School. It was about

Ananias. I had learned the answers and the Golden Text, but it was not yet time to go. I always went to church; I liked to go to church. Then there came this knocking, Alvin, and it was the preacher. I thought perhaps he had come to give her the communion while she was n't very well and could n't go down through the snow. The preacher came in and he looked at me.

"'William,' said the preacher to me, 'do you remember how I gave you the key to the cupboard when you fixed the wall?'

"'Why, yes,' I said. 'Of course!'

"'William,' said he to me, 'did you open the cupboard?'

"'Why, no,' I said. 'I did n't have to, Para [Pastor].'

"'Were you away from the church?'

"'No,' I said. 'I took my dinner. She can tell you that.'

"'Why, William,' said he to me, 'the communion set is gone! The communion set is gone,' he said, 'gone!'

"I went with him to the church, Alvin, and I looked into the cupboard. Everything was gone, Alvin, bag and all. Then I came home and after a while they came. They wanted to talk, they wanted me to tell them everything that had happened all day. But I could n't tell them anything. I had built the wall and a little one had talked to me, that was all. There she sat and here I sat and it was dark.

Then, Alvin, it came to me! When I got halfway up the window, it was too high to go farther, and I went out of the church to get boards and build a platform across chairs so that I could reach. I was gone some little time, and when I came back Hartman was going down the pike. It was Hartman that took the communion set."

Alvin moved toward the side of his chair, and away from his father.

"Then I got up and went down the hill, and into Hartman's house I walked. He was sitting by the table with his best clothes on to go to church and she was there, too. They were always rich; they had everything grand. I made tracks on her clean floor, and she looked sharp at me, but I did not care. I spoke right up to him.

"'When I was building the wall in the church,' I said, 'I went out for a few boards. In that time you were in the church and took the communion set.'

"He did not look at me, Alvin; he just sat there.

"'What would I do with a communion set?' he said after a while to me.

"'I do not know what you would do with it,' I said back to him, 'but you have it. You took it. God will punish you like Ananias.'

"Then, Alvin — " William laid a hand on his son's shrinking arm. "He went to the preacher, and the preacher came to me and said I must be quiet. That the preacher said to me! Then I went to church and prayed out loud before all the people that God would punish the wicked. I did not mention any names, Alvin; I obeyed the preacher in that! But God did not punish him. Everything gets better and better for him all the time. Now, I will punish him, Alvin, and you will help me. I have paid a lot to detectives, but I have not yet enough. He must be watched; we must have proof. I cannot save so much any more because I have not so much work. Now, if you work at the furnace you will make a dollar a day. It will take all we can earn, Alvin, *all*. I did without things that I need; I have saved all I can, but I cannot save enough."

William broke off suddenly. The room was quite dark; where no light was needed, none was made in William Koehler's house. William rose and went stumbling about and lit the lamp, the lamp which Katy saw gleaming against the dark side of the mountain. In its light poor William gazed at his son with yearning. He seemed now perfectly sane.

Then William spoke in a hollow, astonished voice, the lamp rattling in his hand.

"Don't you believe he took it, Alvin?"

"Why, no," stammered Alvin. "What would he want with it?"

CHAPTER V

ANOTHER CHRISTMAS DAY

In the Hartman house on Christmas Day there was feasting, but no rejoicing. Cassie Hartman was fully as able a cook as Grandmother Gaumer, and she roasted as large a turkey and prepared almost as many delicacies as Grandmother Gaumer and Bevy Schnepp prepared for their great party. On the kitchen settle were gifts, a gold breastpin set with a handsome diamond, a heavy gold watch-chain, a boy's suit, a gun, and a five-dollar gold-piece. There were on them no affectionate inscriptions, no good wishes. The breastpin was for Cassie, the watch-chain for John Hartman, the other articles for David. There were no gifts from outsiders — few Millerstonians would have ventured to offer gifts to the rich Hartmans. In the parlor windows hung holly wreaths, the only bought wreaths in Millerstown.

The Hartmans had asked no guests to their feast. John had long since separated himself from the friends of his youth; as for Cassie, the thought of the footprints of Christmas guests on her flag walk and her carefully scrubbed porches would have made the day even more uncomfortable than it was. Moreover, one could not entertain Christmas company in the kitchen, however fine that kitchen might be, and in this wintry weather fires would have to be made in the parlor and the dining-room.

"Company would track dust so for me," Cassie would have said if any one had suggested that some companions of his own age might do David good and might not be a bad thing for his elders. "When you have fires, you have ashes, and I would then have to clean my house in the middle of winter when you cannot clean the carpets right."

Cassie Hartman was a beautiful woman, how beautiful Millerstown, which set a higher value upon mere prettiness than upon beauty, did not know. Her figure was tall and full and she bore herself with grace and dignity. Her face with its even features and its full gray eyes was the face of an austere saint, although her eyes, lifting when you addressed her, seemed rather to hide her real character than reveal it. But her character was austere and reserved, of that you were sure.

If Cassie's soul was a consecrated one, the gods to whom one would have assigned her worship were Cleanliness and Order. The very progress of her husband and son about the house annoyed her because it was masculine and untidy. David knew better than to enter the kitchen with muddy shoes, but his father was not so careful; therefore both trod upon an upper layer of slightly worn rag carpet, superimposed upon the bright and immaculate lower layer. In all other details but one of the management of her house Cassie had her way. Her husband refused stubbornly to leave the great walnut bed and the large room in which he slept for a smaller room at the back of the house, as Cassie wished, so that the great best bedrooms might be garnished day and night with their proper spreads and counterpanes and shams.

Each of Cassie's days and hours had its appointed task. She could have told how her time would be spent from now on until the last hour before her passing, when the preacher would come in the proper Lutheran fashion to give her the communion. The Church required no such ceremony, but Cassie was a formalist in religion and required it for herself.

So the three Hartmans ate alone in their broad kitchen, John Hartman at one end of the table, Cassie far away at the other, and David midway between them. John Hartman's eyes were hardly lifted above his food; he was an intolerably silent person. Cassie's eyes roved everywhere, from her stove, which she could scarcely wait to blacken, toward her husband who ate carelessly, and toward her son, who devoured his drumstick with due regard for the clean cloth. The cloth was spotless and would probably remain spotless, for an extra white cover had been laid beneath the plates of John and David. But to-morrow it would go into the tub, none the less. It was too good to be used every day, and it could not be put away bearing even the slight wrinkles produced by unfolding. Cassie had no more to say than her husband. There was really nothing for Cassie to say. Her mental processes involved herself and her house, they responded to no inspiration from without.

As for little David, he said nothing either. Katy Gaumer had been right when she said that David was a cross boy. David was cross and sullen. To-day, however, he was only solemn. David was deeply concerned about his sins. He was not only a sinner in general, but he had sinned in a very particular way, and he was unhappy. The turkey did not taste as a Christmas turkey should, and his second slice of mince-pie was bitter.

When John Hartman had eaten all he could, he rose and put on his coat and went out to his great barn to feed his stock. He went silently, as was his wont.

When David had finished the last morsel of pie which he was able to swallow, he, too, put on his hat and went toward the door, moving silently and slouchingly. There he stood and nervously kicked the sill. His eyes, gray like his mother's, looked out from under frowning, knitted brows; he thrust his hands deep into his pockets and looked down at the floor. This was Christmas Day; his parents had treated him generously; he was convinced that he ought to confess to them his great wickedness. He felt as though he might cry, and as though crying, if he had a shoulder to lean on, would be a soothing and healing operation. The assault of Katy Gaumer had sunk deep into his heart, as was natural since he thought of Katy night and day, since he saw her wherever she went in her red dress, now scolding, now laughing, and perpetually in motion. He had fled to the attic of the schoolroom yesterday because she had not spoken to him or looked at him, had even passed him with her weight planted for an instant heavily on his foot without even acknowledging his presence. And to the attic she had followed him and had there taunted and insulted him! She had no business to say that he was cross and ugly; he would be nice enough to her if she would return the compliment. As for Grandmother Gaumer's cakes, he had better cakes at home than Grandmother Gaumer could bake!

David's heart was sore, and David was inexpressibly lonely and miserable. He was now certain that he would be happy if he could confess his sins to his mother.

He forgot the last occasion of his appeal to her. Then his finger had been cut, and he had been dizzy and had seized hold of her, and the blood had fallen down on her new silk dress. He forgot her reproof; he remembered only that he needed some sort of human tenderness. His father did not often speak to him, but women were made, or should be made, of different stuff from men. He had seen Susannah Kuhns sit with her great Ollie upon her lap, and Ollie was older than he was by a year. He had heard Katy Gaumer, who had been so outrageously cruel to him, cry over a sick kitten, and Katy was herself often rocked like a baby on Grandmother Gaumer's knee.

David forgot now not only the cut finger, but other repulses. He had no claim on Grandmother Gaumer's embrace, and he would have hated to have to sit on Susannah Kuhns's knee, but upon this tall, beautiful person sitting by the table, he had a claim. Moreover, her embraces would have been pleasant.

"Mom!" said David.

Cassie's eyes were now on the dishes before her. She liked to plan her mode of attack upon a piece of work, and then proceed swiftly, keeping her mind a blank to everything but the pleasure of seeing order grow where disorder had been. Thus she liked to go through her fine house, sweeping the rich carpets, polishing the carved furniture, letting the sunlight in only long enough to show each infamous dust mote. Cassie was in the midst of such planning now; she saw the dishes neatly piled, the hot suds in the pan, her sleeves rolled above her elbows. She did not answer David, did not even hear him.

"Mom!" said David again. He did not know now exactly what he had meant to say. The necessity for confession had dwindled to a necessity for the sound of his mother's voice. It was dismal to live in a house with companions who seemed deaf and blind to one's existence. She *must* speak to him!

At the second call, Cassie looked at her son. Cassie recognized dirt and disorder, but she did not recognize any need of the human soul. The needs of her own soul had been, Cassie thought, cruelly denied. At any rate, its power of perception had failed.

"You stamp on that sill again and I'll have to scrub it, David! To spoil things on Christmas!"

Cassie's voice contained no threat of punishment; it was merely mildly exclamatory. The tone of it was not vibrant but wooden. It might have been rich and beautiful in youth; now it expressed no emotion; it was flat, empty. She did not ask David what he wanted, or why he addressed her; she did not even wonder why he stopped in the doorway and stared at her. She only frowned at him, until he closed the door, himself outside. David had all the clothes he could wear, all the food he could eat; he had the finest house, the richest father and the most capable mother in Millerstown; what more could he wish to make him happy? His mother did not speculate as to whether he was happy or not.

David crossed the yard in the freshly fallen snow and slammed the gate behind him. Then he went toward the mountain road, and started to climb, passing the house of the Koehlers, where William sat on one side of the stove and Alvin on the other, the one muttering to himself, the other half asleep. David kicked the snow as he walked, his head bent lower and lower on his breast. He could see Katy Gaumer like a sprite in her red dress with her flashing eyes and her pointing finger; he could see her smiling at Alvin Koehler, whom he hated without dreaming that in that son of a demented and dishonest father Katy Gaumer could have any possible interest.

As he started up the steepest part of the hill, he began to talk aloud.

"I want her!" said poor little David. "I want Katy! I want Katy!"

Presently David left the road, and climbing over the worm fence into the woodland, struck off diagonally among the trees. Still far above him, at the summit of the little mountain, there was a rough pile of rocks which formed a tiny cairn or cave. Before it was a small platform, parapeted by a great boulder. Generations past had named the spot, without any apparent reason, the "Sheep Stable." It was a favorite resort of David Hartman. Here, in secret, far above Millerstown, he carried on the wicked practices which he had meant to confess to his mother. From the little plateau one could look for miles and miles over a wide, rich, beautiful plain, could see the church spires of a dozen villages, the smoke curling upward from three or four great blast furnaces, set in the midst of wide fields, and could look far beyond the range of hills which bounded the view of William Koehler on his lower level, to another range. The Pennsylvania German made his home only in fertile spots. When other settlers passed the thickly forested lands because of the great labor of felling the trees and preparing the soil, he selected the sections bearing the tallest trees and had as his own the fertile land forever.

David did not look out over the wide, pure expanse upon which a few flakes were still falling and beyond which the sun would soon sink gorgeously, nor did he see the purple shadows under the pine trees, nor observe the glancing motions of a squirrel, watching him from a bough near by. He determined, desperately, firmly, that he would repent no more; he would now return to his evil ways and get from them what satisfaction he could.

He crept on hands and knees into the little cave and felt round under a mass of dried leaves until his hands encountered the instruments of his evil practices. Then David drew them forth, a stubby pipe, which he had smoked once and which had made him deathly ill, and a pack of cards, about whose mysterious and delightful use he knew nothing. He sat with them in his hands on the sloping rock, wishing, poor little David, that he knew how to be wickeder than he was!

Having fed his stock, John Hartman tramped for a little while round his fields in the snow, then he returned to the kitchen and sat down by the window with a newspaper. Cassie lay asleep on the settle. Custom forbade her working on Christmas Day, and she never read, even the almanac. At her, her husband looked once or twice inscrutably, then he laid his head on the back of his tall chair and slept also. It was a scene at which Katy Gaumer would have pointed as proof of the unutterable stupidity of Millerstown.

When her husband slept, Cassie opened her eyes and looked at him with as steady a gaze as that which he had bent upon her. Her mouth set itself in a firm, straight line, her eyes deepened and darkened, her hands, folded upon her breast, grasped her flesh. Surely between these two was some great barrier of offense, given or suffered, of strange, wounded pride, or insufferable humiliation! Presently Cassie's lids fell; she turned her cheek against the hard back of the old settle and so fell asleep also.

John Hartman owned four farms and a great stretch of woodland and a granite quarry on the far side of the mountain and two farms and two peach orchards and an apple orchard on this. A generation ago a large deposit of fine iron ore had been discovered upon a tract of land owned by his father. The deposit was not confined to his fields, but extended to the lands of his neighbors. But while they sold ore and spent their money, John Hartman's father, as shrewd a business man as his son, sold and saved, and laid the foundation of his fortune. In a few years the discovery of richer, more easily mined deposits in the West and the cheap importation of foreign ores made the Millerstown ore for the time not worth the mining. Hartman the elder then covered his mine breaches and planted timber, and the growth set above the treasure underground was now thick and valuable. John Hartman was also a director in a county bank; he owned the finest, largest house in Millerstown; he had a handsome and a capable wife, and a son who was strong in body and who had a good mind. Apparently his position in life was secure, his comfort certain.

John Hartman, however, was neither comfortable nor secure. The long-past accusations of a poor, half-crazed workingman filled his waking hours with apprehension and his nights with remorse. Of William Koehler and his accusation John Hartman was afraid, for William's accusation was, at least in part, true.

John Hartman had been walking away from the church on that bright November day years ago, when his own David and Alvin Koehler were little children and Katy Gaumer not much more than a baby. He had upon him, as William had said, an air of guilt; he had refused to reply to William's shouted greeting; he was at that moment rapidly becoming, if he was not already, what William called him, a thief.

On that November day, a little while before William had shouted at him, he had come down the pike and had seen William leave the church to get the boards for his platform, and had thereupon entered the church with no other impulse than the vague motions of a man sick at heart. A sin of his earlier youth had risen suddenly from the grave where he thought it buried, and now confronted him. In his pocket lay an accusing, threatening letter, written with pale ink upon poor paper in an ignorant way. The amount of money which it demanded, large as it was, did not trouble him, since he was already possessor of his inheritance and growing daily richer; it was the horror of the discovery of his sin. Once cured of his obsession he had become a devout man, had taken pleasure in the services of the church of his fathers, attending all her meetings and contributing to all her causes. He had married a good woman from a neighboring village, who knew nothing of the year he had spent away from Millerstown; he had had a son; he was wholly happy.

He had gone during the latter part of the year which he spent away from home, as a way of escaping from himself, to Europe. He had been only a few weeks ashore, but he had seen during that time civilizations different from anything he had dreamed of. He was most moved by great churches — he saw Notre Dame of Amiens and Notre Dame of Paris — and by the few great English estates of which he caught glimpses in his rapid journey to Liverpool. That was the way a man should live, planted in one place, like a great oak tree, the center of a wide group — a wife, children, dependents. He should have his garden, his woodland, his great house, his stables, his beautiful horses; he should pass the home place on to a son who would perpetuate his name. With such a home and with a worthy church to worship in, a man could ask for nothing else in the world.

Repentant, healed, John Hartman had returned to

Millerstown. There he had married and had built his house, with great rooms at the front and smaller rooms at the back for the servants who should make his wife's life easy and dignified and should help to care for the little brothers and sisters whom David was to have. Cassie had had a hard youth; her father had been a disgrace to his children; she was quiet and stern and not hopeful, even though John Hartman had lifted her to so high a place, of very great happiness in this life. But Cassie's nature had seemed to change in the glow of John Hartman's affection and in the enjoyment of the luxuries with which he surrounded her. She became less silent; she met her husband at times with a voluntary caress, which opened in his heart new springs of happiness.

But here, into this blessed peace and security, into this great planning, fell, like a dangerous explosive, the threatening letter. Almost beside himself with fright, worn with three nights' sleepless vigil, confused with the numerous plans for ridding himself of his persecutor which he made only to reject, and aware that an immediate answer must be sent, John Hartman approached the church where William Koehler had been working.

The open door seemed to invite him to take refuge within. He kept constantly touching the letter in his pocket. He meant to destroy it, but it bore an address which he dared not lose. He had been sitting by the roadside on a fallen log, holding the letter in his hand and writing absent-mindedly upon it.

In the church he saw William's half-finished work and the curious key in the little cupboard. As an elder, he had a right to open the door and to take out the beautiful silver vessels, the extravagance of one generation which had become the pride of the next. It seemed for an instant as though a touch of the holy things might give him peace. Untying the cord of the heavy bag as he laid it on top of William's half-finished wall, he lifted out the silver chalice.

But the sight of the beautiful vessel gave him no relief, and the cool, smooth surface made him shiver. He grasped it suddenly and involuntarily cried out, "Oh, what shall I do! What *shall* I do!"

The grip of his hand was so strong that the cup slipped from his fingers and striking the top of William's wall, bounded into the dark aperture which the building of the wall had made. He reached frantically after it, and the gray bag, containing the pitcher and paten, struck by his elbow, followed the silver cup.

For an instant the accident drove the more serious trouble from John Hartman's mind. He had great reverence for the sacred vessels and he was afraid that the fall had bruised their beautiful surfaces. He tried to reach the bag, which lay uppermost, but it was just beyond the tips of his fingers at the longest reach of his arm. He would have to get William Koehler to help him, much as he disliked to confess to such carelessness. William would be shocked and horrified.

Then, suddenly, John Hartman gave a sharp cry. In his struggle to reach the gray bag, the letter had dropped from his pocket. He had not put it back into its envelope after his last anguished reading; he could see it now as it lay spread out below him in the darkness. His frantic eyes seemed to read each word on the dim page. "Your wife will know about it, and your little boy and all the country." If he called William to help him, William might read the letter. Even if William made no actual effort to decipher it, a single glance might reveal that some one was threatening John Hartman.

He thought that he heard William coming through the new Sunday School room and in panic, and without stopping to reason beyond the swift conclusion that if William's attention were not called to them, he would not see the bag and the letter far down in the narrow pit, he turned and locked the cupboard door and went out the door of the church and down the road. He did not reflect that William might easily discover that the communion set was gone, that he might accidentally drop his trowel into the deep hole and in reaching it find the dreadful letter, and that he might give an alarm, and all be lost; his only thought was to get away.

He remembered dimly that he had brushed aside a little child in his rush to the church door. When he reached the door, he held himself back from running by a mighty effort and walked slowly down the pike, little Katy Gaumer toddling fearfully behind him. It was easy to pretend that he did not hear William call. Already he had planned how he would restore the silver to its place. He knew that William was engaged that afternoon to work at Zion Church; therefore the wall would not be closed that day.

At night he would go to the church with a hoe or rake and lift out the sacred vessels and the dreadful letter, whose very proximity to them was sacrilege. If the pitcher and the chalice and the plate had suffered harm, he would explain that he had taken them to the jeweler to be polished, and he would then have them repaired.

But William postponed his work at Zion Church, and that night, when John Hartman stole back to replace the silver, the wall was finished and the mortar set.

That night, also, John Hartman learned with absolute certainty that his persecutor was dead, and his persecution at an end.

"They do not know that the communion set is gone," thought he. "To-morrow I will find a way."

But in a sort of stupor, from which he roused himself now and then to make wild and fruitless plans, John Hartman let the days go by. The blow he had received had affected him not only mentally, but physically, and he was slow to recover from it, past though the danger was. He went about his farms, he looked earnestly upon his wife, he clasped his little boy in his arms to assure himself that his two treasures were real.

But the more certain he became that the ghost of the past was laid, the more terribly did the present specter rise to harass him. Communion Sunday was approaching, the loss of the communion service would be discovered. There were moments when the distracted man prayed for a miracle. He had been delivered from that other terror by an act of Providence which was almost a miracle; would he not be similarly saved in a situation in which he was innocent?

He thought of going at night and tearing the wall down and restoring the service to its place, leaving the strange vandalism a mystery to horrified Millerstown. How happy he should be to pay for the rebuilding of the wall! But the task was too difficult, discovery too probable.

As the days passed, another way out of his trouble occurred to him. He would go to William Koehler and tell him all his misery. William was a good-natured, quiet soul, who could be persuaded to silence, or who might set a price upon silence, if silence were a salable commodity. William could easily find an excuse for doing his work over; it was well known that he was foolishly particular. It never occurred to John that suspicion of theft would probably fall upon honest, simple William, who had had the key of the cupboard and who had been the whole day alone in the church. He got no farther than his own terrible problem. He had dropped the silver into the wall; both letter and silver were there convict-ing him; he must find a way to get them both out and to put the silver in its place.

But he allowed day after day to pass and did not visit William. William was, after all, only a day laborer of the stupid family of Koehlers and John was a property owner and an elder in the church; it would be intolerably humiliating to make such a confession. Communion Sunday was still two weeks away; there would be time for him to make some other plan.

When Communion Sunday morning came, John had still no plan. Moving as in a trance, he went with his wife to church, to find the congregation gathered into wondering, distressed groups. The door of the little cupboard was open, and beside it was the smooth, newly painted wall. It was too late for John to ask William Koehler for help in his difficulty.

He did not realize that all about him his fellow church members were whispering about William; he did not hear that William was accused, he was so dazed by the fortunate complications of his own situation. They did not dream of his agency! He would replace the set with a much more beautiful one. This generation would pass away long before the wall would be taken down and then the letter would be utterly destroyed by age or dampness. He said to himself that God had been very good to him; he even dared to thank Him during the confused, uneasy service which the pastor conducted upon his return from the house of William Koehler.

And if William were accused, William had only to deny that he had seen the communion service or that he had even opened the door! He might, if worse came to worst, let them search his house. John wished patronizingly that he could give William a little advice. He pitied William.

By night this pity had changed to hate. For like the wildcats, whose leap from above he had feared as a child when he walked the mountain road, so William leaped upon him with his charge.

"You took it!" insisted William. "You stole the communion set!"

Here was ruin, indeed! But Cassie thought the man mad; she paid no attention to his frantic words; she was concerned only about the state of her snow-tracked floor. Hope leaped in the breast of John Hartman. No living soul would believe such an accusation against him!

When William had gone, John put on his coat and went to the house of the preacher. He even forced himself to use one of Millerstown's interesting idioms, one of the last humorous expressions of John Hartman's life.

"William Koehler came to me and accused me of stealing the communion service," said he. "There is one rafter too few or too many in his little house."

The preacher shook his head.

"There is something very wrong with poor William," said he sorrowfully.

With a firm step John Hartman returned to his house. When it was time for the evening service he went to church as was his custom.

John Hartman's bank account increased steadily; he added field to field and orchard to orchard. His great safe in the dining-room held papers of greater and greater value; his great Swiss barns with their deep forebays and their mammoth haylofts were enlarged; his orchards bent under their weight of fruit. But John Hartman did not say to his soul, "Take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." With his soul poor John held a different sort of converse.

Desperately he tried to fix his mind upon his many affairs, so that he might shut out the recollection of William Koehler and the sound of his mad voice. He was afraid for a long time that he, John Hartman, might rise suddenly in church and make rash confession, or that he might point out to his fellow directors in the bank the black-bearded, sharp-eyed face, which he saw looking at him over their shoulders, or that he might shout out upon the street his secret.

Gradually he succeeded in thinking only of his work. The sudden appearance of William Koehler gave him a strange trembling of the limbs and an oppression about the heart, that was all. William made no further accusation for a long time, and encounters could be avoided. Long before William had begun to pray aloud, dropping down in front of the post-office or at a street corner, Millerstown had become certain that he was crazy. His unintelligible prayers betrayed nothing.

But, slowly, as his mind turned itself a little from its own wretchedness, poor Hartman became aware of an enemy in his own household. To his caresses his wife ceased to respond; she had become once more the silent, cold woman of their earliest married life, whom he had chosen because she and the woman who had victimized him were as far apart as the poles in character and disposition. At first poor Hartman thought that she felt his neglect of her during the weeks of his misery; he tried now to be all the more tender and affectionate. If he could only find here a refuge, if he could only lay before her his wretched state! But confession to Cassie was impossible; one had only to look upon her to see that!

Presently Hartman decided that she believed William's accusation, and he became enraged with her because she would believe that to which no one else in Millerstown would give an instant's credence. "Let her believe!" said he then in his despair. She became in his mind a partner of William against him. Let each do his worst; they could convict him of nothing.

In reality it was Hartman's earlier sin which was no more his secret. He had delayed too long in answering the demand for money and a letter had been written to Cassie also, and Cassie had hardened her heart against him, hardened her heart even against her child. Cassie had had a sad life; her heart was only a little softened as yet by her happiness.

"I will not care," cried poor Cassie. "I will henceforth set my heart on nothing!"

Cassie was a woman of mighty will; her youth had trained her to strength. When her child climbed her knee, she put him away from her; when she remembered John Hartman's hopes for the occupation of the many rooms he had built in his house, she shook her head with a deep, choking, indrawn breath. It could never, never be!

But the human heart must have some object for its care or it will cease to beat. Upon her possessions, her house, her carpets, her furniture, Cassie set now her affection. These inanimate things had no power to deceive, to betray, to torture. Gradually they became so precious that her great rooms were like shrines, into which she went but seldom, but to which her heart turned as she sat alone by her kitchen window with her sewing or lay awake by her husband's side in the great wonderfully bedecked walnut bed which, to her thinking, human use profaned.

Thus, in the same house, eating at the same table, sitting side by side in church, watching their son grow into a young manhood which was as silent as their middle age, the guilty man and the unforgiving woman had lived side by side for almost fifteen years this Christmas Day. John Hartman had built no great church, rising like a cathedral on the hillside. He had not even presented the church with a communion service, being afraid of rousing suspicion. He had gathered great store for himself — an object in life toward which he had never aimed.

Millerstown suspected nothing, neither of the sin of John Hartman's youth, nor of his strange connection with the disappearance of the communion service, nor of poor Cassie's aching, hardening heart. Millerstown, like the rest of the world, accepted people as they were; it did not seek for excuses or explanations or springs of action. John Hartman was a silent and taciturn man — few persons remembered that he had been otherwise. Cassie was so unpleasantly particular about her belongings that she would not invite her neighbors to quiltings and apple-butter boilings, and so inhumanly unsocial that she would not attend those functions at other houses. There was an end of the Hartmans.

Gradually a second change came over John Hartman. His horror of discovery became a horror of his sin; he was bowed with grief and remorse.

"He has gone crazy over it!" he lamented. "William Koehler has gone crazy over it. I wish" — poor Hartman spoke with agony — "I wish he had proved it against me. Then it would all have been over long ago!"

When William Koehler's wife died, John Hartman struggled terribly with himself, but could not bring himself to make confession. From an upper window he watched the little cortège leave the house on the hill; he saw William lift his little boy into the carriage; he saw the cortège disappear in the whirling snow. But still he was silent.

When William in his insanity mortgaged his little house in order to pay dishonest and thieving men to watch John Hartman, John Hartman secured the mortgage and treasured it against the time when he would prove to William that he had tried to do well by him. John Hartman also bought other mortgages. When Oliver Kuhns, the elder, squandered his little inheritance in the only spree of his life, John Hartman helped him to keep the whole matter from Millerstown and restored to him his house. When one of the Fackenthals, yielding to a mad impulse to speculate, used the money of the school board and lost it, John Hartman gave him the money in secret. Proud Emma Loos never knew that her husband had wasted her little patrimony before he died. Sarah Benner never discovered that for days threat of prison hung over her son and that John Hartman helped him to make good what he had stolen.

But John Hartman's benefactions did not ease his soul. He came to see clearly that he must have peace of mind or he would die. He no longer thought of the disgrace to his wife and son; his thoughts had been for so long fixed upon himself that he could put himself in the place of no one else.

"To-morrow I will make this right," he would say, and forever, "To-morrow, to-morrow!"

But the years passed and William Koehler grew more mad and John Hartman more rich and more silent, and the silver service lay deep in the pit between the church and the Sunday School. The little building was solid, it was amply large, it would serve many generations. Katy Gaumer, brushed out of his path by John Hartman as he sought the door that November day, recalled nothing of the incident except that her childish dignity had been wounded. It was Katy herself who said that nothing ever happened in Millerstown!

Presently the beating of John Hartman's pulse quickened; it became difficult for him to draw a long, free, comfortable breath. Dr. Benner, whom he consulted, said that he must eat less and must walk more. John Hartman said to himself that now, before another day passed, he would go to the little house on the mountain-side and begin to set right the awful wrong of his youth. But still he planned to go to-morrow instead of to-day. Finally, one afternoon in May, he had his horse put into the buggy and drove slowly up the mountain road.

CHAPTER VI

THE MILLERSTOWN SCHOOL

THE 24th of December, with its great Christmas entertainment, had closed a term of average accomplishment in the Millerstown school. Alvin Koehler and David Hartman, who composed the highest class, had been, the one as idle, the other as sullen, as usual. The children had learned about as much as the Millerstown children were accustomed to learn in an equal time, they had been reprimanded about as often. The teacher had roared at them with the vehemence usually required for the management of such young savages as Coonie Schnable and Ollie Kuhns and Katy Gaumer. Katy, in the second class, had not nearly enough to keep her busy; there remained on her hands too many moments to be devoted to the invention of mischief.

But now, suddenly, began a new era in the Millerstown school. Mr. Carpenter, recovering at happy ease in his home in a neighboring village from the strain put upon him by the stupidity and impertinence and laziness of his pupils, was to be further irritated and annoyed.

School opened on New Year's morning, and Mr. Carpenter rose a little late from his comfortable bed at Sarah Ann Mohr's and ate hurriedly his breakfast of delicious panhaas and smoked sausage. Haste at meals always tried the sybarite soul of Mr. Carpenter. He was cross because he had to get up; he was cross because he had to teach school; he was cross at Sarah Ann because she urged him to further speed. Sarah Ann always mothered and grandmothered the teacher.

"You will come late, teacher. You will have to hurry yourself. It is not a good thing to be late on New Year's already, teacher. New Year," — went on Sarah Ann in her provokingly placid way, — "New Year should be always a fresh start in our lives."

Mr. Carpenter slammed the kitchen door; he would have liked to be one of his own scholars for the moment and to have turned and made a face at Sarah Ann. He was not interested in fresh starts. Taking his own deliberate, comfortable time, he started out the pike.

Then, suddenly, the clear, sweet notes of the schoolhouse bell, whose rope it was his high office to pull, astonished the ears of the teacher. It was one of the impertinent boys, — Ollie Kuhns, in all probability, — who thus dared to reprove his master.

"It will give a good thrashing for that one, whoever he is," Mr. Carpenter promised himself. "He will begin the New Year fine. He will ache on the New Year."

But the bell rang slowly, its stroke was not such as the arm of a strong boy could produce. Indeed, Mr. Carpenter never allowed the boys to ring the bell, because there responded at once to the sound the whole of alarmed Millerstown seeking to rescue its children from fire. The bell had, moreover, to Mr. Carpenter's puzzled ears, a solemn tone, as though it portended things of moment. Faster Mr. Carpenter moved along, past the Squire's where Whiskey barked at him, and he hissed a little at Whiskey; past Grandfather Gaumer's, where he thought of Grandfather's Katy and her ways with bitter disapproval, to the open spaces of the pike.

The bell still rang solemnly, as Mr. Carpenter hurried across the yard and up the steps.

In the vestibule of the schoolhouse, he stood still, dumb, paralyzed. The ringer of the bell, the inventor of woe still unsuspected by Mr. Carpenter, stood before him. During the Christmas holiday, Katy's best dress had become her everyday dress; its red was redder than Katy's cheeks, brighter than her eyes; it had upon her teacher the well-known effect of that brilliant color upon certain temperaments. Mr. Carpenter's cheeks began to match it in hue; he opened his lips several times to speak, but was unable to bring forth a sound.

Katy gave the rope another long, deliberate pull, then she eased her arms by letting them drop heavily to her sides. From within the schoolroom the children, even Ollie Kuhns, watched in admiration and awe. Katy was always independent, always impertinent, but she had never before dared to usurp the teacher's place.

"Say!" Thus in a terrible voice did Mr. Carpenter finally succeed in addressing his pupil. "Who told you you had the dare to ring this bell?"

To this question Katy returned no answer. With eased arms she brushed vigorously until she had removed the lint which had gathered on her dress, then she walked into the schoolroom, denuded now of its greens and flags and reduced to the dullness of every day. Her teacher continued his admonitions as he followed her up the aisle.

"I guess you think you are very smart, Katy. Well, you are not smart, that is what you are not. I would give you a good whipping if I did right, that is what I would do. I —"

To the amazement of her school-fellows, Katy, after lingering a moment at her desk, followed Mr. Carpenter to the front of the room. She still made no answer, she only approached him solemnly. Was she going, of her own accord, to deliver herself up to punishment? Mr. Carpenter's heavy rod had never dared to touch the shoulders of Katy Gaumer, whose whole "Freundschaft" was on the school board.

The Millerstown school ceased speculating and gave itself to observation. Upon the teacher's desk, Katy laid, one by one, three books and a pamphlet. Then Katy spoke, and the sound of the school bell, solemn as it had been, was not half so ominous, so filled with alarming import as Katy's words. She stood beside the desk, she offered first one book to the master, then another.

"Here is a algebray," explained Katy; "here is a geometry, here is a Latin book. Here is a catalogue that tells about these things. I am going to college; I must know many things that I never yet heard of in this world. And you" — announced Katy — "you are to learn me!"

"What!" cried Mr. Carpenter.

"I am sorry for all the bad things I did already in this school." The Millerstown children quivered with excitement; on the last seat Ollie Kuhns pretended to fall headlong into the aisle. Alvin Koehler looked up with mild interest from his desk which he had been idly contemplating, and David Hartman blushed scarlet. Poor David's pipe had not yet cured him of love. "I will do better from now on," promised Katy. "And you" — again this ominous refrain — "you are to learn me!"

"You cannot study those things!" cried Mr. Carpenter in triumph. "You are not even in the first class!"

"I will move to the first class," announced Katy. "This week I have studied all the first class spelling. You cannot catch me on a single word. I can spell them in syllables and not in syllables. I can say *l*, *l*, or double *l*. I can say them backwards. I have worked also all the examples in the first class arithmetic. The squire" — thus did Katy dangle the chains of Mr. Carpenter's servitude before his disgusted eyes — "the squire, he heard me the spelling, and the doctor, he looked at my examples. They were all right. It will not be long before I catch up with those two in the first class." Katy flushed a deeper red. Over and over she said to herself, "I shall be in the first class with Alvin, I shall be in the first class with Alvin!" Her knees began suddenly to tremble and she started back to her desk, scarcely knowing which way she went.

As she passed down the aisle, she felt upon her David Hartman's glance. He sat in the last row, his head down between his shoulders. As Katy drew near, his gaze dropped to the hem of her red dress. David's heart thumped; it seemed to him that every one in the school must see that he was in love with Katy Gaumer. He hated himself for it.

"Don't you want me in your class, David?" asked Katy foolishly and flippantly. Katy spoke a dozen times before she thought once.

David looked up at her, then he looked down. His eyes smarted; he was terrified lest he cry.

"I have one dumb one in my class already," said he. "I guess I can stand another."

Katy dropped into her seat with a slam. The teacher's hand was poised above the bell which called the school to order, and for Katy, at least, there was to be no more ignoring of times and seasons.

"Dumb?" repeated Katy. "You will see who is the dumb one!"

With the loud ringing of the teacher's bell a new order began in the Millerstown school. Its first manifestation was beneficent, rather than otherwise. It became apparent that with Katy Gaumer orderly, the school was orderly. The morning passed and then the afternoon without a pause in its busy labors. No one was whipped, no one was sent to the corner, no one was even reproved. A studious Katy seemed to set an example to the school; a respectful Katy seemed to establish an atmosphere of respect. Mr. Carpenter was wholly pleased.

But Mr. Carpenter's pleasure did not last. Mr. Carpenter became swiftly aware of a worse condition than that of the past. Mr. Carpenter had been lifted from the frying-pan and laid upon the fire.

To her teacher's dismay, Katy came early in the morning to ask questions; she stayed in the schoolroom at recess to ask questions; sometimes, indeed, she visited her afflicted teacher in the evenings to ask questions. Katy enjoyed visiting him in the evenings, because then Sarah Ann Mohr, sitting on the other side of the table, her delectable Millerstown "Star" forgotten, her sewing in her lap, her lips parted, burned before her favorite the incense of speechless admiration. Poor Mr. Carpenter grew thin and white, and his little mustache drooped as though all hope had gone from him. Mr. Carpenter learned to his bitter sorrow that algebra and geometry were no idle threats, and Mr. Carpenter, who had put his normal school learning, as he thought, forever behind him, had to go painfully in search of it. The squire was Katy's uncle, the doctor was her cousin; they were all on Katy's side; they helped her with her lessons; they encouraged her in this morbid and unhealthy desire for learning, and the teacher did not dare to refuse her. The difficulties of the civil service examination appalled him; he could never pass; he must at all costs keep the Millerstown school.

Occasionally, as of old, Katy corrected him, but now her corrections were involuntary and were immediately apologized for.

"You must not say 'craddle'; you must say 'crawl' or 'creep,'" directed Katy. "Ach, I am sorry! I did not mean to say that! But how" — this with desperate appeal — "how can I learn if you do not make it right?"

Sometimes Katy threatened poor Mr. Carpenter with Greek; then Mr. Carpenter would have welcomed the Socratic cup.

"My patience is all," he groaned. "Do they take me for a dictionary? Do they think I am a encyclopædia?"

Still, through the long winter Katy's relatives continued to spoil her. In Millerstown there has never been any objection to educating women simply because they are women. The Millerstown woman has always had exactly what she wanted.

The normal schools and high schools in Pennsylvania German sections have always had more women students than men. If Katy wanted an education, she should have it; indeed, in the sudden Gaumer madness, Katy should have had the moon if she had asked for it and if her friends could have got it for her. Her grandfather and grandmother talked about her as they sat together in the evenings while Katy was extracting knowledge from the squire or from the doctor or from Mr. Carpenter, never dreaming that they were rapidly ruining the Benjamin of their old age. They had trained many children, and the squire had admonished all Millerstown, but Katy was never admonished by any of them. They liked her bright speech, they liked her ambition, they allowed themselves the luxury of indulging her in everything she wanted.

"She is that smart!" Bevy Schnepp expressed the opinion of all Katy's kin. "When she is high gelernt [learned], she will speak in many woices [tongues]."

Of all her relatives none spoiled Katy quite so recklessly as young Dr. Benner. There was not enough practice in healthy Millerstown to keep him busy, and Katy amused and entertained him. He liked to take her about with him in his buggy; he liked to give her hard problems, and to see to what lengths of memorizing she could go. Dr. Benner had theories about the education of children and he expounded them with the cheerful conceit of bachelors and maiden ladies. Dr. Benner, indeed, had theories about everything. It was absurd, to Dr. Benner's thinking, ever to restrain a healthy child from learning.

"Let 'em absorb," said he. "They won't take more than is good for 'em."

Dr. Benner was nearly enough related to Katy to be called a cousin, yet far enough removed to be stirred into something like jealousy at Katy's enthusiastic defense of the Koehlers. Katy should have no youthful entanglement — Dr. Benner remembered his own early development and flushed shamefacedly — to prevent her from growing into the remarkable person she might become. Dr. Benner decided that she must be got away from Millerstown as soon as possible; she had been already too much influenced by its German ways. Katy was meant for higher things. For a while young Dr. Benner felt that, pruned and polished, Katy was meant for him!

Meanwhile, Katy was to be saved from further contamination by being kept constantly busy. It pleased him to see her devoted to algebra, and he was constantly suggesting new departures in learning to her aspiring mind. It was unfortunate that each new suggestion included a compliment.

"I believe you could sing, Katy," said he, one March day, as, with Katy beside him, he drove slowly down the mountain road.

The landscape lay before them, wide, lovely, smiling, full of color in the clear sunshine. Far away a bright spot showed where the sun was reflected from the spires and roofs of the county seat; here and there the blast furnaces lifted the smoky banner of prosperous times.

Katy's cheeks were red, her dark hair blew across her forehead; it was with difficulty that she sat still beside the doctor. Spring was coming, life was coming.

"Sing?" said Katy, "I sing? I would like that better than anything I can think of in this world. I would rather be a singer than a missionary."

There was really nothing in the world that Katy would not have liked to do, except to stay in Millerstown and be inconspicuous; there was nothing in the world which she questioned her ultimate ability to do.

The doctor chuckled at Katy's comparison, which Katy had not intended to be funny.

"A classmate of mine is coming to see me next week. He teaches singing, and I'm going to get him to hear your voice. Won't that be fine, Katy?"

"Everything is fine," answered Katy.

The doctor's classmate arrived; for him Katy *oh'd* and *ah'd* through an astonishingly wide range. The young man was enthusiastic over her vocal possibilities.

"But he says you must n't take lessons for another year," said Dr. Benner.

Again he and Katy were driving down the mountain road. They had climbed this afternoon to the Sheep Stable, and from there had gazed at the glorious prospect and had counted through a glass the scattered villages and the church spires in the county seat.

Katy's blood tingled in her veins. She had never dreamed that she could *sing!* She had never seen a picture which was painted by hand or she would now have been certain that she could become a great artist. She determined that some day she would return to the Sheep Stable alone and there sing for her own satisfaction. She had not sung her best for the doctor's friend down in grandmother's parlor, her best meaning her loudest. At the Sheep Stable there would be no walls to confine the great sounds she would produce.

"I will sing so that they hear me at Allentown," she planned. "I have no time now, but when I have time I will go once. It is so nice not to be dumb," finished Katy with great satisfaction.

The winter passed like a dream. Presently an interesting change came about in the Millerstown school and in its teacher. Perhaps Mr. Carpenter was mortified, as well as driven into it, but there sprang up somehow in his soul a decent, honest ambition. Delving painfully after forgotten knowledge, he studied to some purpose, and it began to seem as though even civil service questions might become easy and Mr. Carpenter pass his examinations at last. For the first few weeks of the new régime, he was able to keep only a lesson or two ahead of his pupils, but, little by little, that space widened. As if in pure spite, Mr. Carpenter learned his lessons. Then he assumed a superior and taunting air. Katy at the Christmas entertainment had looked at him with no more disgust than his face now expressed when his pupils gave wrong answers.

"'Gelt regiert die Welt, und Dummheit Millerstown'" (Gold rules the world and stupidity Millerstown)! Thus Mr. Carpenter adapted a familiar proverb in comment upon mistakes which he himself would have made a month ago.

Mr. Carpenter's pupils followed him steadily. David Hartman was more mature than the others and kept without difficulty at their head. As for Katy, with the help which Katy had out of school hours, even a dull child might have done well. It was help which was not unsuspected by David, but David held his tongue. David felt a fierce, unwilling pride in Katy's spirit.

But there was another sort of help being given and received which David resented jealously and indignantly, hardly believing the evidence of his own ears and eyes. David had taken some pleasure in the winter's work. He sat daily beside Katy in class; it was not possible for her to be always rude and curt. David was also puzzled and moved by a change in his father. He often met his father's glance when he lifted his own eyes suddenly, and it seemed to him that his father had come to realize his existence. His heart softened; he was pathetically quick to respond to signs of affection. It seemed to him that each day brought with it the possibility of some new, extraordinary happening. Several times he was on the point of putting his arm about his father's shoulders as he sat with his paper. Without being conscious of it, John Hartman showed outwardly the signs of the inward struggle. Never had his yearning, repressed love for the boy so tortured him, never had it demanded so insistently an outward expression. But he repressed himself a little longer. When he should have made all right with William Koehler, then would he yield to the impulses of fatherhood. That bound poor Hartman had set himself.

Katy remembered all her life, even if Alvin Koehler did not, the day on which Alvin set to work with diligence. He often looked at her curiously, as if he could not understand her. But Alvin gave earnest thought only to himself, to his hopeless situation with a half-mad and dishonest father and the dismal prospect of working in the furnace. His father seemed to be becoming more wild. There were times when Alvin feared violence at his hands. He talked to himself all day long, making frequent mention of John Hartman. Sometimes Alvin thought vaguely of warning the squire or John Hartman himself about his father. He believed less and less his father's crazy story.

Sometimes Alvin stared at Katy and blinked like an owl in his effort to account for her alternate shyness and kindness. Alvin was not accustomed to being treated kindly.

"And what will you do when you are educated?" he inquired.

"What will I do?" repeated Katy, her heart thumping as it always did when Alvin spoke to her. "I will teach and I will earn a great deal of money and travel over the whole world and buy me souvenirs. And I will sing."

It was very pleasant to tell Alvin of her prospects. Perhaps he would walk home with her from church on Sunday. Then how Essie Hill, in spite of all her outward piety, would hate her! The secret of mild Essie's soul was not a secret from Katy.

"Will you teach in a school like Millerstown?" asked Alvin.

"Millerstown! Never! It would have to be a bigger school than Millerstown."

Alvin looked up at Mr. Carpenter. It was recess and Mr. Carpenter was hearing a spelling class which had not learned its lesson for the morning recitation. Mr. Carpenter did not appear at his best, judged by the usually accepted standards of etiquette; he leaned back lazily in his chair, his feet propped on his desk, his hands clasped above his head; but to Alvin there was nothing inelegant in his attitude. Mr. Carpenter was an enviable person; he never needed to soil his hands or to have a grimy face or to carry a dinner pail.

"Teaching would be nice work," said Alvin drearily. "But I can never learn this Latin. I am all the time getting farther behind. It gets every day worse and worse."

"Oh, but you can learn it!" cried Katy, her face aglow. If he would only, only, let her help! "I will show you. Here are my sentences for to-day. The doctor went over them and he says they are all right." And blushing, with her heart pounding more than ever, Katy returned to her seat.

There was a difficult sentence in that day's lesson, a sentence over which David Hartman had puzzled and on which he failed. Then the teacher called on Alvin, simply as a matter of form. The school had begun to giggle a little when they heard his name. But now up he rose, the dull, the stupid, the ordinary, and read the sentence perfectly! At him David Hartman stared with scarlet face. He expected that the teacher would rise and annihilate Alvin, but the teacher passed to the next sentence. Mr. Carpenter was at the present time angry at David; he was rather glad he was discomfited. Such was the nature of Mr. Carpenter!

To Alvin David said nothing, but upon the shoulder of Katy Gaumer, putting on her cloak in the cupboard after school, David laid a heavy hand.

"You helped Alvin!" David's hand quivered with astonishment and anger and from the touch of Katy's shoulder. "It is cheating. Some day I am going to catch you at it before the whole school."

Before she could answer, if she could have made answer at all, David was gone. She hated him; she would help Alvin all she liked until he had caught up, and afterwards, too, if she pleased. Alvin had had no chance, and David had everything, a rich father, fine clothes and money. It was perfectly fair for her to help Alvin. She hated all the Hartmans. She was furiously angry and it hurt to be angry. It did not occur to her to be ashamed of Alvin who would accept a girl's translation. With a whirl and a flirting of her skirts, Katy sailed through the door and down the pike.

"You will sit in Millerstown!" she declared to the empty air. "But I am going away! Nothing ever happens in Millerstown. Millerstown is nothing worth!" Then Katy stood still, dizzy with all the glorious prospect of life. "I am going away! I am going away!"

CHAPTER VII

THE BEE CURE

JANUARY and March and April passed, and still Mr. Carpenter and his pupils studied diligently. David Hartman did not carry out his threat to expose Katy; such a course would have been impossible. Day after day it seemed more certain that his father was about to say to him some extraordinary thing. He saw his father helping himself out of his buggy with a hand on the dashboard; he saw that hand tremble. But his father still said nothing. That May day when John Hartman would at last begin to right the wrong he had done had not yet arrived.

In spite of all Katy's efforts she could not pass above David in school. Alvin Koehler needed less and less help, now that he was convinced that through learning lay the way to ease and comfort, to the luxurious possession of several suits of clothes, to a seat upon a platform. Mr. Carpenter would never have to do hard work; Alvin determined to model his life after that of his teacher. He scarcely spoke to his father now, and he grew more and more afraid of him.

In May the Millerstown school broke its fine record for diligence and steady attendance. The trees were in leaf, the air was sweet, the sky was dimmed by a soft haze, as though the creating earth smoked visibly. Locust blooms filled the air with their wine-like perfume, flowers starred the meadows. Grandmother Gaumer's garden inside its stone wall was so thickly set with hyacinths and tulips and narcissus that one wondered where summer flowers would find a place. Daily Katy gathered armfuls of purple flags and long sprays of flowering currant and stiff branches of japonica and bestowed them upon all who asked. Katy learned her lessons in the garden and planned for the future in the garden and thought of Alvin in the garden.

One day, unrest came suddenly upon the Millerstown boys; imprisonment within four walls was intolerable. Even Katy, yearning for an education, was affected by the warmth of the first real summer day, and Alvin Koehler wished for once that he had learned to swim, so that he could go with the other boys to bathe in Weygandt's dam. Alvin had not yet bought the red necktie; money was more scarce than ever this spring. Alvin's whole soul demanded clothes. He reflected upon the impression he had made upon Katy Gaumer; he observed the blush which reddened the smooth cheek of Essie Hill at his approach; he was increasingly certain that his was an unusual and attractive personality.

All through the long May afternoon, Katy studied with great effort, wishing that she, too, had played truant, and had climbed to the Sheep Stable as she had long planned, there to discover the full volume of her voice. She looked across at Alvin, but Alvin did not look back.

All the long afternoon Alvin gazed idly at his algebra, and all the long afternoon David Hartman and Jimmie Weygandt and Ollie Kuhns and the two Fackenthals and Billy Knerr and Coonie Schnable braved the wrath of Mr. Carpenter and played truant. First they traveled to the top of the mountain, then raced each other down over rock and fallen tree; and then, hot and tired, plunged into Weygandt's dam, which was fed by a cold stream from the mountain. When the water grew unendurable, they came out to the bank, rubbed themselves to a glow with their shirts, and hanging the shirts on bushes to dry, plunged back with shouts and splashing.

Mr. Carpenter did not greatly regret their absence. Upon him, too, spring fever had descended; he was too lazy to hear thoroughly the lessons of the pupils who remained. When the lowest class droned its "ten times ten iss a hundred," Mr. Carpenter was nodding; when they sang out in drowsy mischief, "'laven times 'laven iss a hundred and 'laven," Mr. Carpenter was asleep.

Mr. Carpenter planned no immediate punishment for his insubordinate pupils. The threat that he would tell their parents would be a powerful and valuable weapon in his hands for the rest of the term. The Millerstown parents had fixed theories about the heinousness of truancy.

But though Mr. Carpenter planned no punishment, punishment was meted out.

The stroke of the gods was curiously manifested. The next morning the disobedient seven ate their breakfasts in their several homes, in apparently normal health, unless a sudden frown or twist of lip or an outburst of bad temper might be said to constitute symptoms of disorder. One or two clung closely to the kitchen stove, though the day was even warmer than yesterday, and David Hartman visited surreptitiously the cupboard in which his mother kept the cough medicine with which he was occasionally dosed. With a wry face he took a long swallow from the bottle. Ollie Kuhns hung round his neck the little bag filled with asafœdita, which had been used in a similar manner for the baby's whooping-cough, and Jimmie Weygandt applied to himself the contents of a flask from the barn window, labeled "Dr. Whitcraft's Embrocation, Good for Man and Beast."

All left their homes and walked down the street with the stiff uprightness of carriage which had prevented their families from realizing how grievously they were afflicted. But one and all, they forgot their household chores. Billy Knerr's mother commanded him loudly to return and to fill the coal bucket, but Billy walked on as calmly as though he were deaf, and turned the corner into the alley with a thankful sigh.

There his erectness vanished. He stood and rubbed his knee with a mournful "By Hedes!" an exclamation of unknown origin and supposed profanity much affected by him and his friends, and henceforth walked with a limp. A little ahead was Ollie Kuhns, who, when shouted at, turned round bodily and stood waiting as stiff and straight as a wooden soldier. It was difficult to believe that this was the supple "Bosco, the Wild Man, Eats 'em Alive," who rattled his chains and raised his voice in terrifying howls in the schoolhouse cellar.

"Where have *you* got it?" demanded Billy.

"In my neck. I cannot move my head an inch."

"I have it in my knee. Indeed, I thought I would never get out of bed. My mom is hollering after me yet to fetch coal, but I could not fetch coal if they would chop off my head for it."

"Do you suppose any one else has it like this?"

Billy did not need to answer. The alley through which they walked led out to the pike, where moved before them a strange procession. The vanquished after a battle could have worn no more agonized aspect, could not have been much more strangely contorted.

"Both my arms are stiff," wailed Coonie Schnable. "It is one side as bad as the other."

"I can't bend over," announced the older Fackenthal, woefully. "I gave my little sister a penny to tie my shoes and not say anything."

"Did any of you tell your folks?" demanded Ollie. "Because if you did we will all get thrashed."

A spirited "No!" answered the insulting question.

"I got one licking from my pop last week," mourned Billy Knerr. "That will last, anyhow a while." The pain in Billy's knee was so sharp that sometimes, in spite of all his efforts, tears rolled down his cheeks. "You'll never catch me in that dam again, so you know it!"

"It was n't the dam," said David Hartman, irritably. David could not indicate a spot on his body which did not ache. "We were too hot and we stayed too long. Ach! Ouch! I'll—" The other pupils of the Millerstown school had crowded about the sufferers and had jostled against them and David turned stiffly upon them with murder in his heart. But it was impossible to pursue even the nearest offender, Alvin Koehler. Instead David cried babyishly, "Just you wait once till I catch you!"

Not for the world would unsuspecting Alvin have jostled him intentionally. He knew better than to offer to any schoolmate a gage to physical conflict. They were too strong and there were too many of them. He saw the jostled David speak to Billy Knerr; he saw Billy Knerr approach him and he turned, ready for flight.

Then Alvin's eyes opened, his cheeks flushed. Billy called to him in a tone which was almost beseeching, "Wait once, Alvin! Do you want to make some money, Alvin?"

At once the red tie, still coveted and sighed for, danced before Alvin's longing eyes. Money! he would do anything to make money! He stood still and let Billy approach, not quite daring to trust him.

"What money?" he asked, hopefully, yet suspiciously.

"Come over here once," said Billy.

With great hope and at the same time with deadly fear, Alvin ventured toward the afflicted crew.

"We have the rheumatism," explained Billy.

"Where?" asked Alvin stupidly.

"Where!" stormed Ollie, with a violence which almost ended the negotiations. "Where! In our legs and our backs and our arms and our eyelids." Ollie was not one to wait with patience. "We will give you a penny each for a bee in a bottle. Will you sell us a bee in a bottle, or won't you?"

Alvin's eyes glittered; fright gave place to joy. There has always been a tradition in Millerstown that the sting of a bee will cure rheumatism. The theory has nothing to do with witchcraft or powwowing; it seems more like the brilliant invention of a practical joker. Perhaps improvement was coincident with the original experiment, or perhaps the powerful counter-irritant makes the sufferer forget the lesser woe. Bee stings are not popular, it must be confessed; they are used as a last resort, like the saline infusion, or like a powerful injection of strychnia for a failing heart.

Strangers had often come to be stung by William

Koehler's bees, but Alvin had never heard that any of them were cured. Alvin himself had tried the remedy once for a bruise with no good result. One patient had used violent language and had demanded the return of the nickel which he had given William, and William was weak enough to pass it over. But now the red tie fluttered more and more enticingly before Alvin's eyes. If he could earn seven cents by putting seven of his father's bees in bottles, well and good. It made no difference if the patients were deceived about the salutary effects of bee stings.

Then into the quickened mind of Alvin flashed a brilliant plan.

"I will do it for three cents apiece," he announced with craft. "I cannot bann [charm] them so good as pop. They will perhaps sting me."

Alvin's daring *coup* was successful.

"Well, three cents, then. But you must get them here by recess." Ollie Kuhns groaned. He was not used to pain, and it seemed to him that his agony was spreading to fresh fields. "Clear out or the teacher will get you and he won't let you go. He's coming!"

With a great spring, Alvin dropped down on the other side of the stone fence, and lay still until the teacher had shepherded his flock into the schoolroom. By this time not only the red tie, but a whole new suit dazzled the eyes of Alvin. Old man Fackenthal bottled his cough cure and sold it all about the county. Why should not bees be bottled and labeled and sold? If their sting was supposed to be so valuable a cure, they would be a desired commodity. Alvin had told a lie when he had said he could not "bann" bees as well as his father, for he had over them the same hypnotic influence. He saw himself spending the rest of his life raising them and catching them and bottling them and selling them. There would have to be air holes through the corks of the bottles so that they could breathe, and a few drops of honey within to nourish them, but with these provisions they could be shipped far and wide.

"They would be powerful mad when they were let out," said Alvin to himself, as he lay in the lee of the schoolhouse fence. "The people would get their money's worth."

Alvin saw suddenly all the old people in the world stiff and sore and all the young people afflicted like Ollie and his friends. He did not wish for any of them such a fate. He had various weaknesses, but a vindictive spirit was not one of them. He saw only the possibilities of a great business. Hearing the schoolhouse bell, and knowing that all were safely within doors, he started across the fields and up the mountain-side.

The bargain was consummated in the woodshed, a little frame building leaning against the blank wall of the schoolhouse. Alvin, hurrying back from his house, scrambling over fences, weary from his long run, thought that he was too early with the wares in the basket on his arm. Or could it be, alas!

that he was late and recess was over? That would be too cruel! With relief he heard the sound of voices in the woodshed where his patients awaited him.

The truants had endured an hour and a half of torture. They anticipated punishment for yesterday's misdemeanor, and they had a deadly fear that that punishment would be physical. Anxiously now from the woodshed, where they could lie at their ease, they listened for Alvin.

"Perhaps he won't come back," suggested Billy Knerr. "Perhaps he cannot catch the bees."

Recess was all over but five minutes, and the disheartened sufferers were expecting the bell, when Alvin appeared. David Hartman had collected the money against such necessity for haste, and, indeed, had advanced most of it from his well-lined pocket. Only in such dire trouble would he have treated with Alvin Koehler; only in this agony would he have bought from any one such a pig in a poke. If he had been himself, he would have made Alvin open the basket and would have examined the contents to be sure that Alvin was playing fair. But now, with only two minutes to cure himself and his friends of their agony, there was no time for the ordinary inspection of the articles of trade.

The commodities exchanged hands; twenty-one pennies into Alvin's outstretched palm, the basket into David's. It took David not much more than one of his hundred and twenty seconds to open the basket lid, even though it fitted closely and needed prying. A low, angry murmur, which the boys had not heard in their pain, changed at once to a loud buzz, and suddenly the hearts of the most suffering failed them. But the basket lid was off, and with it came the lid of a fruit jar which stood within. The bees were not in separate bottles — Alvin maintained stoutly that separate bottles had not been stipulated — so that one sting could be applied at a time, like a drop of medicine from a pippette; they were, or, rather, they had been, in a broad-mouthed jar, whose lid, as I have said, came off with the basket lid.

Moreover, at this instant the door of the woodshed, impelled by a gentle May breeze, blew shut and the latch dropped on the outside. There were seven boys penned into the woodshed and there were at least a hundred bees. Alvin had been in too much of a hurry to count the precious things he sold. He had held the jar before the outlet of the hive and the bees had rushed into it. Granted that honey bees sting but once, and granted that thirty of these bees did not sting at all, there were still ten for each patient.

Wildly the frantic prisoners batted the bees about with their bare hands. There were no hats, there was nothing in the empty woodshed which could be used as a weapon. Piteously they yelled, from great David Hartman to the eldest of the Fackenthals.

The uproar reached the ears of Alvin, who was just entering the schoolhouse door and Alvin fled incontinently to the gate and down the road. It penetrated to the schoolroom and brought Mr. Carpenter rushing angrily out. He had rung the school bell; his pupils did not respond; he thought now that their yells were yells of defiance. Emboldened by yesterday's success they had arranged some new anarchy. Whatever may have been the faults of Mr. Carpenter, he was physically equal to such a situation, short and slender though he was. He tore open the woodshed door; he caught Ollie Kuhns and shook him before any one could explain. Then, as he reached for the collar of David Hartman, one of the bees, which had not already committed suicide by stinging, lit on his hand. The pain did little to pacify the teacher. The boys, seized one after the other, had no shame strong enough to keep them from crying. Herded into the schoolroom, David at the tail end with the teacher's grasp on his ear, they forgot their rheumatism, they forgot the girls, they forgot even Alvin himself, who was by this time flying down the road. They laid their heads upon their desks, and Mr. Carpenter, dancing about, demanded first of one, then of the other, an explanation of this madness. Mr. Carpenter forgot his objections to Pennsylvania German; in this moment of deep anguish he was compelled to have recourse to his native tongue.

"What do you mean?" roared Mr. Carpenter. "What is this fuss? Are you crazy? You will catch it! Be quiet! Go to your seats! It will give an investigation of this ! Ruhig!!"

In reality Mr. Carpenter himself was producing most of the confusion. The grief of those at whom he stormed was silent; they still sat with heads bent upon their desks. At them their schoolmates gaped, for them the tender-hearted wept.

As Alvin flew down the pike he began to be frightened. He was not repentant, not with twenty-one coppers in his pocket! He had a nickel already and now the beautiful tie was his. He could not go at once to purchase it for fear that the smitten army behind him might rally and pursue, nor did he wish to hide his money about the house for fear that his father might find it. He decided that he would get himself some dinner and then go walking upon the mountain. It would be well to be away from home until the time for his father's return. To his house the lame legs of his schoolmates might follow him, there their lame arms seize him, but to the Sheep Stable they could not climb. He did not realize that, as he crossed the fields above his father's house, he was for a moment plainly exposed to the view of the Millerstown school.

Tired, certain that he was out of reach of the enemy, Alvin lay down on the great rock which formed the back of the little cave. His heart throbbed; he was not accustomed to such strenuous exertion of body or to such rapid and determined operations of mind. He was even a little frightened by his own bravery and acuteness. He thought for a long time of himself and for a little time of Katy Gaumer and Essie Hill; then, deliciously comfortable in the spring sunshine, he fell asleep.

For three hours Alvin lay still on the great rock. Occasionally a chestnut blossom drifted down on his cheek, and was brushed drowsily away; occasionally the chatter of a squirrel, impatient of this human intrusion, made him open his eyes heavily. But each time he dropped into deeper sleep. The rock was hard, but Alvin was young and, besides, was not accustomed to a soft bed.

At the end of three hours he woke suddenly. It seemed to him that a dark cloud had covered the sun or that night had fallen. But a worse danger than storm or darkness was at hand.

Above him, almost touching his own, bent an angry face.

"Get up!" commanded a stern voice, and Alvin slid off the rock and stood up.

"Now, fight," David ordered. "I was stiff but I am not so much stiff any more. But the stiffness you may have for advantage. One, two, three!"

Even with the handicap of stiffness, the advantage was upon the side of David. He was strong; he was furiously and righteously angry; he had been shamed in the eyes of Millerstown. Katy Gaumer had seen his ignominy; she had whispered about him to Sarah Knerr. Alvin was a coward; he had long been cheating; he had accepted the help of a girl. Besides, Katy Gaumer was kind to him. For that crime his punishment had long been gathering.

Automatically Alvin raised his fist. Below them was the steep, rock-piled hillside; back of them was the rock wall of the Sheep Stable; and there was no help nearer than Millerstown, far below in its girdle of tender green. Even through the still air Alvin's cries could not be heard in the valley. He cried out when David struck him; he begged for mercy when David laid him on his back on the stony ground. He thought that there was now no hope for him; he was certain that his last hour had come. He expected that David would hurl him down over the edge of the precipice to the sharp rocks far below. He closed his eyes and moaned.

David had already determined to let his victim go. He was suddenly deeply interested in certain sensations within himself; he was distracted from his intention of administering to Alvin all the punishment he deserved. He felt a strange, uplifted sensation, a consciousness of strength; he was excited, thrilled. Never before in his life had he acted so swiftly, so entirely upon impulse. The yielding body beneath him, Alvin's fright, made him seem powerful to himself. The world was suddenly a different place; he wanted now to be alone and to think.

But David had no time to think. As unexpectedly as though sent from heaven itself arrived the avenger. Katy Gaumer had found time dull and heavy on her hands. Alvin had vanished; there would be the same lessons for the next day since one third of the class was absent and one third incapacitated. Katy was amused at the tears of David and his friends. A bee sting was nothing, nor yet a little stiffness! Katy had been once stung by a hornet and she had had a sprained ankle. Katy's heart was light; she had had recently new compliments from the doctor about her voice, and she had determined that this afternoon she would ascend to the Sheep Stable and startle the wide valley with song.

Katy was not lame or afflicted; she climbed gayly the mountain road. Nor was Katy afraid. She would not have believed that any evil could befall one so manifestly singled out by Providence for good fortune. She sang as she went; therefore she did not hear the wails of Alvin. Alvin cried loudly as he lay upon the ground; therefore he did not hear the song of Katy.

But Alvin felt suddenly the weight shoved from his body; he saw the conqueror taken unawares, thrust in his turn upon the ground; and he had wit and strength enough to scramble to his feet when the incubus was removed.

"Shame on you!" cried the figure in the red dress to the figure prone upon the ground. "Shame on you! You big, ugly boy, lie there!" Katy almost wept in her wrath. It was unfortunate for Katy that she should have been called upon to behold one toward whom her heart was already unwisely inclined thus in need of pity and help.

To Alvin's amazement the conqueror, a moment ago mighty in his rage, obeyed. The arrival of Katy, sudden as it was to him, was even more sudden to David. David was overwhelmed, outraged. He had not wit to move; he heard Katy's taunts, saw her stamp her foot; he heard her command Alvin to come with her, saw her for an instant even take Alvin by the hand, and saw Alvin follow her. His eyes were blinded; he rubbed them cruelly, then he turned over on his face and dug his hands into the ground. From poor David's hot throat there came again that childish wail. Conquered thus, David was also spiritless; he began to cry, "I want her! I want her! I want her!"

Aching, motionless, he lay upon the ground. With twitching tail the squirrel watched from his bough, chattering again his disgust at this queer human use of his abiding-place. The air grew cool, the blazing sun sank lower, and David lay still.

Meanwhile, down the mountain road together went Katy Gaumer and Alvin Koehler.

"He came on me that quick," gasped Alvin. He had brushed the clinging twigs from his clothes and had smoothed his hair. His curls lay damp upon his forehead, and his cheeks were scarlet, his chin uplifted.

Katy breathed hard.

"Well, I came on him quick, too!"

Alvin began to gasp nervously. Self-pity overwhelmed him.

"I have nothing in this world," mourned he. "This summer I will have to work at the furnace. I will have a hard life."

"But I thought you were going to have an education!" cried Katy.

"I cannot," mourned Alvin. "It is no use to try. I am alone in the world."

Katy turned upon him a glowing face.

"That is nonsense, Alvin! Everybody can have an education. There are schools where you can study and work, too. It is so at the normal school where they learn you to teach. I thought you were going to be a teacher, Alvin!"

"I was," said Alvin. "I would like to be a teacher."

"I will find out about those schools," promised Katy, forever eager to help, to plan. "I am going away; nothing would keep me in Millerstown. You must surely go, Alvin!"

"David Hartman can have everything," wailed Alvin, his aching bones making themselves felt. "He had no business to come after me. He has a rich pop. He —"

"He has a horrible pop," answered Katy. "He chased me once when I was little, and I never did him anything. Why, Alvin!" Katy stopped in the dusty road. "There is David's pop in his buggy at your gate!"

Alvin grew deathly pale, he remembered his father's madness, his threats, the crime which he had committed and which he blamed upon John Hartman.

"What is it?" cried Katy. "What ails you, Alvin? He would not dare to touch me now that I am big. Come!"

"No!" Alvin would not move. "Look once at him, Katy! Something is the matter with him!"

"I am not afraid," insisted Katy bravely. "I am — he is sick, Alvin; he is sitting quiet in his buggy." She went close to the wheel. "Mr. Hartman!" She turned and looked at Alvin, then back at the figure in the buggy. "His head hangs down, Alvin, and he will not answer me. I believe he is dead, Alvin!"

Slowly Alvin moved to Katy's side. He laid a hand upon her arm — Katy thought it was to protect her; in reality Alvin sought support in his deadly fear.

"I believe it, too, Katy!"

Speechlessly the two gazed at each other. When Alvin had shouted wildly for his father and Katy had joined her voice to his and there was no answer, the two set off, hand in hand, running recklessly down the mountain road.

CHAPTER VIII

WILLIAM KOEHLER MAKES HIS ACCUSATION FOR THE LAST TIME

DUSK was falling when David started down the mountain road. He did not walk rapidly; sometimes, in his weakness, he stumbled. Bad as his aches had been when he climbed the mountain hours before, they were worse now, and added to them was smart of soul. Every spot on his body upon which Katy had laid her hand burned; she was continually before his eyes in her kaleidoscopic motions, now running down the pike from school, now storming at him as he lay on the ground. He tried to hate her, but he could not. As he stumbled along, his feet kept time to a foolish wail, "I want her! I want her!" The glow of triumph had faded entirely; David was more morose, more sullen, more unhappy than ever. His anger with Alvin had changed to a sly intention to scheme against him until he could give him a greater punishment than a mere beating. He was not done with Alvin! His own father was a rich and powerful man; Alvin's father was a poor, half-witted thief. He thought for the first time with satisfaction of his father's wealth.

The young moon overhead, the scent of spring in the air, the gentle breeze against his cheek, all deepened his misery and loneliness. He said to himself that he had no one in the world. In spite of his vague conclusions about his father, his father was still the same. There are persons whose success depends wholly upon their relations with the human beings nearest to them. Given affection, they expand; denied it, their souls contract, their powers fail. It is a weakness of the human creature, but it is none the less real. Resentment was rapidly becoming a settled attitude of David's mind; his father was postponing dangerously that opening of his heart to his son of which he thought day and night.

David wished now that he need not go home; he wished — poor little David! — that he was dead. He would have his supper and he would go to bed, and to-morrow there would be another bitter day. He would sit in school and be conscious of Katy and Alvin and their knowing glances, and love and hate would tear him asunder once more.

Then David stood still and looked down upon his house. Even though the trees about it were thickly leafed, he could see lights in unaccustomed places. The parlor was lighted; in that room David could not remember an illumination in his lifetime. There were lights also in bedrooms — David forgot his aches of body and soul in his astonishment. He slept over the kitchen in one of the little rooms his father had provided for the day when servants should attend upon the wants of his children; except for his father's and mother's room the front of the house was never opened. Had some great stranger come to visit — but that was unthinkable! Was some one ill — but that would be no reason for the opening of the house! David did not know what to make of the strange sight. He hurried down the road, almost falling as he ran.

Then David stood still, looking stupidly at a dark wagon which stood before the gate. He knew the ownership and the purpose of that vehicle, but he could not connect it with his house. There dwelt only his father and his mother and himself, and all of them were alive and well.

A group of children lingered near by, silent, staring at the dark wagon and the brightly lighted windows. The Hartman house with its illumination was as strange a phenomenon as the Millerstown children had ever seen. To them David, still standing at his gate, put a question.

"What is the matter?"

Instantly a small, excited, feminine voice piped out an answer.

"Your father is dead."

"He was sitting in his buggy in the mountain road," another excited voice went on. "They brought him down here and carried him in."

David went into the yard and along the flag walk, and for the first time in his life entered his father's house by the wide-open front door, through which various Millerstonians were passing in and out. This was a great opportunity for Millerstown.

Some one came out of the parlor, leaving the door ajar, and David saw a long dark figure lying on a low couch in the middle of the room. What there was to be known about his father's death he gathered from the conversation of those about him. He heard pitying exclamations, he felt that in a moment he would burst into cries of shock and terror. Bitterness fled, he was soft-hearted, weak, childlike. His father was gone, but there remained another person. He must find her; in her lay his refuge; she must be his stay, as he must henceforth be hers. Stumbling back through the hall toward the kitchen, he sought his mother. He was aware of the kind looks of those about him; his whole being was softened.

"Mother!" he meant to cry. "Oh, mother! mother!"

He felt her grief; he expected to find her prostrate on the old settle, or sitting by the table with her head on her arm, weeping. He would comfort her; he would be a good son to her; he truly loved her.

From the kitchen doorway he heard her voice, clear and toneless, the voice of every day. She was giving orders to the Millerstown women who had hastened in with offers of help, — to Grandmother Gaumer and Sarah Knerr and Susannah Kuhns. She indicated certain jars of canned fruit which were to be used for the funeral dinner, and planned for the setting of raised cake and the baking of "fine cake." In Cassie's plan for her life, she had prepared for this contingency; even now her iron will was not broken, nor her stern composure lost. She moved about as David had always seen her move, quiet, capable, self-centered. She shed no tear; she seemed to David to take actual pleasure in planning and contriving.

The frantic cry, already on David's lips, died silently away, his throat stiffened, he drew a long breath. For an instant he stood still in the doorway; then, with a bent and sullen head, he turned and crept back through the hall to the front stairs, which had scarcely ever been touched by his foot, and thence to his tiny room, where he knelt down by his narrow bed. How terrible was the strange figure under the black covering, with the blazing lights beating upon it, and the staring villagers stealing in to look! It seemed incredible that his father could lie still and suffer their scrutiny. He wished that he might go down and turn them out. But he did not dare to trust his voice, and besides, his mother accepted it all as though it were proper and right. Then David forgot the intruders, forgot his mother. His father was dead, of whom he had often thought unkindly, and his father was all he had in the world. He would never be able to speak to him again, never be able to lay a hand upon his shoulder as he sat reading his paper, never meet again that sudden glance of incomprehensible distress. Death worked its alchemy; now at last the poor father had his way with his son's heart.

"He was my father!" cried David. "I have no father!"

His breath choked, his heart seemed to smother him; he felt himself growing light-headed as he knelt by the low bed. He had had nothing to eat since noon; he had had since that time many things to suffer; he thought suddenly in his exhaustion that perhaps he, too, was about to die.

Presently there was a step in the hall and his heart leaped. Perhaps his mother had come, perhaps she did not wish to show her grief to these curious people. But the person outside knocked at the door and his mother would not have knocked.

"What is it?" asked David.

"It is me," said Bevy. "I brought you a little something to eat."

Bevy waited outside, plate and glass in hand. She had seen David's entrance and exit. Prompted now partly by kindness and sympathy, and partly by an altogether human and natural curiosity to see as much of the house and the bereaved family as she could, Bevy had carried him his supper. But Bevy was not rewarded, as she had hoped.

"Put it down," commanded a voice from within. "Thank you."

Bevy made another effort.

"Do you want anything, David?"

"No, thank you," said the voice again.

"Yes, well," answered Bevy and went down the front steps. If Bevy could have had her wish, her whole body would have been one great eye to take in all this magnificence of thick carpets and fine furniture.

Then, while the mother for whom he hungered made her plans for the great funeral feast, still customary in country sections, where mourners came from a long distance, and while Katy Gaumer recounted to curious Millerstown how she had found John Hartman sitting in his buggy by the roadside, David ate the raised cake and drank the milk which Bevy brought him. Then he sat down by the window and looked out into the dark foliage which on this side touched the house. It had not been John Hartman's plan to have his house grow damp in the shadow of overhanging branches, but John Hartman had long since forgotten his plans for everything.

Sitting here in the darkness, David thought of his father. The puzzle of that strange character he could not solve, but one thing became clear to his mind. He saw again that yearning gaze; he remembered from the dim, almost impenetrable mist which surrounded his childhood, caresses, laughter, the strong grasp of his father's arms. Finally he lay down on the bed and went to sleep, a solemn, comforting conclusion in his heart.

"My father loved me," whispered David. "I am sure my father loved me."

A little later David's mother opened his door softly and entering stood by his bed. She had not seen him in the kitchen; some one had told her that he had come in and had gone to his room. She saw that he was covered and that the night air did not blow upon him, and then she took the empty plate and glass and went back to the kitchen.

Alvin Koehler need not have suspected his father of having had any hand in the death of John Hartman. William Koehler was in the next village, where he had half a day's work. While he worked he plotted and planned and mumbled to himself about his wrongs. It was apoplexy which had killed John Hartman as he drove up the mountain road; Dr. Benner told of his warnings, recalled to the mind of Millerstown the scarlet flush which had for a long time reddened John Hartman's face. If he had taken the path so long avoided by him in order to confess his crime to the man he had wronged and thus begin to make his peace with God, he had set too late upon that journey, for his hour had been appointed. When William, walking heavily, with his eyes on the ground, came home from Zion Church, John Hartman lay already in the best room of his house, his earthly account closed. When he heard the news of John Hartman's death, William seemed stupefied; it was hard to believe that he understood what was said to him.

It was not necessary that any provision should be made beyond the great dinner for the entertainment of guests at the Hartman house. Nevertheless, the house was cleaned and put in order from top to bottom for its master's burying. Fluted pillow and sheet shams and lace-trimmed pillow-cases were brought forth, great feather beds were beaten into smoothness, elaborate quilts were unfolded from protective wrappings and were aired and refolded and laid at the foot of beds covered with thick white counterpanes. There was dusting and sweeping and scrubbing, and, above all, a vast amount of cooking and baking. The funeral was to be held in the morning, and afterwards there would be food at the Hartman house for all those who wished to partake.

Cassie was fitted with a black dress, various bonnets were sent out from the county seat for her to try, and over each was draped the long black veil of widowhood,—this, to Cassie, in the opinion of Millerstown, a crown of independence. Millerstown could form no judgment of Cassie's feelings. If she had, like William Koehler, any moment of stupefaction, or, like David, any wild outburst of grief, that fact was kept from a curious world.

David also was fitted with a suit of black, and together he and his mother rode in a closed carriage, sent from the county seat, down through pleasant Millerstown in the May sunshine and out to the church on the hill.

The service was long, as befitted the dignity of a man of prominence like John Hartman who had always given liberally to charitable objects, though he had become of late years an infrequent attendant at church meetings. The preacher who had heard the accusation of William Koehler was long since gone; the present pastor who lauded the Christian life of the dead man knew nothing of any charge against him. He would scarcely have known William by sight, so entirely had William separated himself from the life of the village. The preacher had a deep, moving voice, he spoke with feeling of the death of the righteous, and of the crown laid up for them in heaven. Many of the congregation wept, some in recollection of their own dead, some in sad anticipation of that which must some day befall themselves, and some in grief for John Hartman. Two men, sitting in opposite corners of the gallery, bowed their heads on the backs of the benches before them so that their tears might drop unseen. Oliver Kuhns, the elder, stayed at home from the funeral and at home from his work, and watched from the window the procession entering the church, and wept also. John Hartman was not without mourners who called him blessed!

David and his mother sat in the front pew, near the body, which had been placed before the pulpit. Upon David had settled a heavy weight of horror. He had not yet accustomed himself to the fact of his father's death. Only a few days before he had seen his father moving about, had sought to read the enigmatic expression in his eyes. But here his father lay, dead. Living he would never have suffered these stares, this weeping. Upon David, also, rested the interested, inquisitive eyes. From the gallery

Katy Gaumer looked down upon him; from a seat near her Alvin Koehler stared about. The smothering desire to cry rushed over David once more; he slipped his hand inside his stiff collar as though to choke off the rising sob. Beside him rose the black pillar of his mother's crape; on the other side was the closed door of the old-fashioned pew. He was imprisoned; for him there was no escape. The service would never end; here he would be compelled to sit, forever and ever.

Then, suddenly, to the startled eyes of David and of Millerstown, there rose in the right-hand gallery the short, bent figure of a man. The preacher did not see; Millerstown sat paralyzed. They had never been really afraid of William Koehler, queer as he was, but now there was madness in his face. His eyes blazed, his cheeks were pale, he had scarcely touched food since he had heard of the death of his enemy. He had not gone to work; he had sat in his little house talking to himself, and praying that he might, after all, have some sort of revenge upon the man who had wronged him. Several weeks ago he had consulted a new detective, who, in the hope of getting a fee, or wishing to have an excuse for getting rid of him, had given him fresh encouragement. The sudden ending of his hopes was all the more cruel.

"I have something to say," he announced now in his shrill voice. "This man lying here is not a good man. I have this to say about him. He — he —"

Then poor William paused. Already, to his terror, in spite of his practicing, the words were slipping away from him. He had planned to tell the story carefully, impressing each detail upon the large congregation which would gather at the funeral. They *must* listen to him. It would be useless to cry out suddenly the whole truth, that John Hartman was a thief — he had tried that once, and had been silenced by the preacher. The detective had said that he must get all his proofs carefully together. He had arranged them in his poor, feeble mind; he meant to speak as convincingly as the preacher himself. His eyes were fixed on the smooth gray wall beside the puplit cupboard; the sight of it helped to keep his mind clear. There he had been working on the day when the communion set was taken.

He rubbed his damp hands down the sides of his dusty suit, and a flush came into his cheeks. He remembered clearly once more what he had to say.

"I was building up the wall," he said with great precision. "I — "

Stupidly he halted. He began to grow frightened; the unfriendly faces paralyzed his brain; the words he had planned so carefully slipped all at once away from him. He pointed at the still figure lying in front of the pulpit and burst into vehement, frantic speech.

"He stole the communion set!" he cried shrilly. "He stole it! He — "

Poor William got no further. Many persons rose.

The two men in opposite corners of the gallery who had wept started toward him; one of them opened his lips, as though, like crazy William, he was about to address the congregation. The paralyzed spectators came to their senses. Hands were laid upon William. The deacons and elders of the church went toward the gallery steps, Grandfather Gaumer among them. Even Alvin in his mortification and shame had still feeling enough to go to his father's side.

"Come away, pop!" he begged. "Ach, be quiet, pop, and come away!"

"He tells me to be quiet!" cried William in the same shrill tone. "My son tells me to be quiet!"

Grandfather Gaumer laid a firm hand on his shoulder.

"Come with me, William."

But William was not to be got so quietly away. In the front pew young David had risen. Was his father not now to have a decent burying? David's face was aflame; he did not see the madness in the shivering figure and the bright eyes of William Koehler. William belonged with his son Alvin, and both were hateful.

But David had no chance to speak. The preacher foolishly held up a forbidding hand to poor William.

"You cannot say such a thing at this time and not confess that it is not true. The accused cannot answer for himself."

Poor William rubbed his hands over his eyes. He still had great respect for the authority of preachers. Besides, he saw John Hartman suddenly as a dead man, and since his trouble he had always been afraid of death. No revenge could be visited upon this deaf, impassible object, that was sure!

"Ach, I forget my mind!" wailed poor William. "I forget my mind!"

Then William could have been led unresisting away. But the preacher, stupidly insistent, held up his hand again.

"Do you confess that your accusation is not true?" said he.

William placed a hand on either side of his forehead. It seemed as though his head were bursting and he must hold it close together. There was now a murmur of speech in the congregation. This terrible scene had gone on long enough; John Hartman did not need defense from so absurd an accusation. Then the murmur ceased.

"No!" cried William. "It is not true. I took the communion set myself!"

William was now led away, a final seal put upon the pit in which his honesty and sanity lay buried. Another unforgivable offense was added to the sum of unforgivable offenses of the son of William Koehler toward young David. The confession did not help the Millerstown church to recover its beautiful silver. William's insanity, the congregation thought, was the only bar to its recovery.

John Hartman was laid in the grave which had been walled up by the mason who had taken William Koehler's place in Millerstown, and which had been lined with evergreens and life everlasting according to Millerstown's tender custom. Over him prayers were said and another hymn was sung, "Aus tiefer Noth shrei ich zu dir" (Out of the depths I cry to thee), familiar to generations of Millerstown's afflicted. Then the procession returned to John Harman's great house, whispering excitedly.

David sat in his room during the funeral dinner. David was queer; he was not expected to do as other people did. His fury with the Koehlers took his thoughts to some extent away from his grief.

That night Cassie did not sleep in the great, comfortable room at the front of the house which she had shared with her husband, but in a room even smaller than David's at the back. It contained, instead of the great walnut four-poster, with its high-piled feather bed to which she was accustomed, a little painted pine bedstead and a chaff bag; it was on the north corner of the house and was cold in winter and deprived of the breeze by the thick foliage in summer. Her husband's fortune was left to her while she lived; afterwards it was to go to David. Cassie was amply able to manage it, the investments were safe, the farmers had been in her husband's employ many years; it was not likely that anything would disturb the smooth, dull current of Cassie's life.

There was much discussion in Millerstown about whether it was safe for the community to allow William Koehler to be at large; there was some comment upon the cooking at the Hartman funeral dinner; then Millerstown turned its attention to other things. Cassie had behaved just as she might have been expected to behave. It was surprising, however, that she had let Millerstown go so thoroughly through her house.

The day after the funeral David went back to the Millerstown school. He did not glance in the direction of Katy and Alvin, though he could not help realizing that Katy's skirts did not flirt so gayly past. Katy was sorry for him, though she did not repent her treatment of him. Her dresses had suddenly dropped several inches, her flying curls were twisted up on her head, her eyes were brighter than ever. She was filled with herself and her own concerns and opinions; she grew daily more dictatorial, more lordly.

"I am going away!" said she, upon rising.

"I am going to be educated!" said she at noon.

"I can take education," said she at night. "I thank God I am not dumb!"

She and Grandmother Gaumer were increasingly busy with dressmakers' patterns and with "Lists of Articles to be provided by Students." Life was at high tide for Katy Gaumer.

Still David kept at the head of his class. In his mind a slow plan was forming. He would think of

Katy no more, of that he was determined, and he would, as a means of accomplishing that end, leave Millerstown. His mother was a rich woman; he could do anything in the world he liked. He would first of all go to college. Afterwards he would study law.

In June he started late one Sunday afternoon to walk to the Sheep Stable. Overwhelmed as he had been upon that spot, he loved it too well to stay away. The heavenly prospect was part of his life's fabric and would continue to be all his days.

As he passed the Koehler house, he heard a strange sound, apparently an unending repetition of the same phrase. It was William Koehler at his prayers — Millerstown knew now for what William prayed!

"God will punish *him!*" said David with a hot, dry throat. "If there is a God" — thus said David in his foolish youth — "if there is a God, he will punish him! Oh, I wish, I wish I could see my father!"

At the Sheep Stable, as one who opens the book of the dim past, David took his pipe and cards from their hiding-place and hurled them far down the mountain-side. He even managed to smile a little sorely at himself.

It was dark when he returned to the village. He did not like to walk about in the early evenings, past the groups of Millerstonians on the doorsteps; they talked about him, and he did not like to be talked about. Now almost all Millerstown had gone to church. The pastor of the Improved New Mennonites was conducting a meeting in a neighboring village, but there was service in all the other churches. A few persons sat on their doorsteps, listening quietly to the music which filled the air, — the sound of the beautiful German hymns of the Lutherans and the Reformed, and the less classic compositions of the New Baptists. Millerstown was like a great common room on summer evenings, with the friendly sky for ceiling.

Again the young moon rode high in the heavens; again David's young blood throbbed in his veins; again the miserable, unmanly desire for the girl who would have nothing to do with him began to devour him. He bit his lips, wondering drearily where he should go and what he should do. The night had just begun; he would not be sleepy for hours. Nothing invited him to the kitchen or to the two little bedrooms to which Cassie had restricted their living. He had no books, and books would have been after all poor companions on such a night as this.

David was not an ill-looking boy; he had indeed the promise of growing handsome as he grew older; he was many times richer than any other young man of Millerstown. There were probably only two girls in the village to whom these pleasant characteristics would make no appeal. The first of these was Katy Gaumer. The second was smooth, pretty, blue-eyed Essie Hill, the daughter of the preacher of the Improved New Mennonites, who sat now demurely on her father's doorstep. Beside her David suddenly sat himself down.

CHAPTER IX

CHANGE

IT sometimes happens that death gathers from a single spot a large harvest in a year. We seem to have been forgotten; we learn to draw once more the long, secure breath of youth; we almost believe that sorrow will no more visit us.

For many months Millerstown had had scarcely a funeral. In security Millerstown went about its daily tasks. Then, in May, John Hartman was found dead along the mountain road.

In June there came a letter from the Western home of Great-Uncle Gaumer, telling of a serious illness and the rapid approach of the end of his life. A few days later, when a telegram announced his death, Grandfather Gaumer himself dropped to the floor in the office of his brother the squire and breathed no more. Dr. Benner, who was passing, heard from the street the crash of his fall and the squire's loud outcry, and Bevy rushed in from the kitchen. The doctor and the squire knelt beside him, and still kneeling there, regarded each other with amazement.

Bevy Schnepp lifted her hands above her head and cried out, "Lieber Himmel!" and stood as if rooted to the floor. "Who will tell her?"

The squire rose from his knees, pale and unsteady, and stood looking at his brother as though the sight were incredible.

"Is there no life?" he asked the doctor in a whisper.

The doctor shook his head. "He was gone before he fell."

Bevy began to cry. "Ach, who will tell her?"

"I will tell her," answered the squire. Then he went round the house and across to the other side of the homestead where Grandmother Gaumer and Katy sat at their sewing.

There was a quantity of white material on Grandmother Gaumer's lap, and her fingers moved the needle swiftly in and out. Katy was talking as she hemmed a scarlet ruffle — Katy was always talking. She had been shocked by the news of the governor's illness, but she believed that he would get well. Besides, she had seen the governor only once in her life, and her grandfather had assured her that her plans for her education need not be changed. She could not be long unhappy over anything when all these beautiful new clothes were being made for her and when she was soon to leave dull Millerstown, and when Alvin Koehler had twice sat on the doorstep with her. She had journeyed to the county seat with her grandmother and there had made wonderful purchases.

"And the ladies in the stores are so fine, and so polite, and they show you everything," said Katy.

"When Louisa Kuhns went to Allentown she said, 'the people are me so unpolite, they go always bumping and bumping and they don't even say *uh!*' That is not true. I do not believe there is anywhere in the world a politer place than Allentown.

"Louisa —" No gap between subjects halted Katy's speech; she leaped it with a bound. "Louisa is very dumb. Now I do not believe myself that a person can learn everything. But you can train your mind so that you can understand everything if it is explained to you. You must keep your mind all the time busy and you must be very humble. Louisa said that poetry was dumb. Louisa cannot even understand, 'Where, oh, where are the visions of morning?' Louisa thinks everything must be real. I said to her I would be ashamed to talk that way. The realer poetry is the harder it is. But Louisa! Ach, *my*! Gran'mom! The teacher said Louisa should write 'pendulum' in a sentence, and Louisa wrote 'Pendulum Franklin is dead'!"

"Do you like poetry, Katy?" asked Grandmother Gaumer.

"Some," answered Katy. "It is not the fault of the poetry that I cannot understand it all. I want to understand everything. I do not mean, gran'mon, that you cannot be good unless you understand everything. But there is more in this world than being good. Sarah Ann is good, but Sarah Ann has a pretty slow time in this world."

"Sarah Ann does many kind things."

"But the squire and gran'pop do more because they are smarter," said Katy triumphantly. "When the people want advice, do they go to Sarah Ann? They come to the squire or to gran'pop!"

Grandmother Gaumer smiled. Sometimes Katy talked in borrowed phrase about a "larger vision" or "preparation for a larger life."

"Millerstown!" said Katy with a long sigh and a shake of the head. "I could not stay forever in Millerstown, gran'mom. Think of the Sunday School picnics with the red mint candy on the cakes and how Susannah and Sarah Knerr try to have the highest layer cakes, and each wants the preacher to eat. Think of the Copenhagen, gran'mom, and the Bingo and the Jumbo, gran'mom!" In derision Katy began to sing, "A certain farmer."

Grandmother Gaumer leaned forward in her chair. A sense of uneasiness overwhelmed her, though Katy had heard nothing. "Listen, Katy!"

There was nothing to be heard; Grandfather Gaumer had fallen; beside him knelt his brother and the doctor; aghast Bevy flung her arms above her head; all were as yet silent.

"It is nothing, gran'mom," said Katy. Katy began her chattering again; she laughed now because Bevy had said that it brought bad luck to use black pins on white material or to sew when the clock struck twelve. Grandmother Gaumer went on with her stitching. A boy ran down the street; the sound disturbed her.

"I will go and see," offered Katy, putting the scarlet ruffles off her lap. She did not move as swiftly as she would have moved six months ago. Then the sound of rapid steps would have drawn her promptly in their wake. But the affairs of Millerstown had ceased to be of great importance. She did not even hate Millerstown now. "I guess it is just a boy running, gran'mom. I guess —"

The squire had thought that he would go bravely to Grandmother Gaumer and put his arm round her and break to her gently the terrible news. He did not realize that his lips and hands grew each moment more tremulous and his cheeks more ashen. He saw his sister-in-law sitting beside her lovely garden in security and peace, and his heart failed him.

Katy had risen to her feet, and she stood still and regarded him with astonishment. She had forgotten for the instant that he was awaiting news of Governor Gaumer's death. Now she remembered it and was disturbed to the bottom of her soul by the squire's evident grief. Grief was new to Katy.

Grandmother Gaumer laid down her needle and thread. "Ach, the governor is gone, then!" said she. "Did a letter come?"

"Yes," answered the squire. "A message came. He died in the night."

Tears came into Grandmother Gaumer's eyes. "Where is William? I thought he was by you."

The squire sat down in the chair beside Grandmother Gaumer and took her hand. The heap of white stuff slid off her lap to the floor of the porch and lay there unheeded until hours later when Bevy gathered it up, weeping, and laid it away.

"I have bad news for you," said the squire.

"Well," said Grandmother Gaumer, bravely.

"When William heard that Daniel was gone, he dropped to the floor like one shot."

"William!" cried Grandmother Gaumer.

"Yes," answered the squire. "He suffered no pain. The doctor said he knew nothing of it."

"Knew nothing of it!" repeated Grandmother Gaumer. "You mean that he fell *dead?*"

"Yes."

"Where is he?" asked Grandmother Gaumer in a quieter tone.

"In my office. They will bring him home."

"Then we will make a place ready for him. Come, Katy."

Katy followed into the kitchen. Grandmother Gaumer stood looking about her and frowning, as though she were finding it difficult to decide what should be done. Katy thought of John Hartman and of his strange attitude and his staring eyes. Would Grandfather Gaumer look like that? Katy was about to throw herself into the arms which had thus far opened to all her griefs.

"Ach, gran'mom!" she began, weeping.

Then, slowly, Grandmother Gaumer turned her head and looked at Katy. Her eyes were intolerable to Katy.

"What shall I do?" she asked. "I am old. I cannot think. We have lived together fifty years. I cannot remember where my things are. There are things put away in the bureaus all ready for such a time. What shall I do, Katy?"

With a gasp Katy drove back the tears from her smarting eyelids. Katy was confused, bewildered; she still lacked the education with which she expected to meet the problems of life. But Katy, whose forte was managing, did not fail here.

"You will sit here in this chair, gran'mom. I will get a white pillow to put on the settee and they can lay gran'pop there. Then we will find the things for them." She guided her grandmother to the armchair and helped her to sit down. Even the touch of her body seemed different. "It will take only a minute for me to go upstairs. I will be back right away. You know how quickly I can run."

When Katy returned, the feet of the bearers were at the door. With them Millerstown crowded in, weeping. Grandmother Gaumer had wept with them, Grandfather Gaumer had helped them in their troubles. Grandfather was laid in state in the best room and presently the house settled into quiet. In this house five generations had met grief with dignity and death with hope; thus they should be met once more.

Preparations were begun at once for the laying away of the body in the little graveyard of the church which the soul had loved. At the feet of his mother, beside his little sister, a grave was dug for William Gaumer and was lined with boughs of arbor vitæ and sprays of life everlasting.

In the Gaumer house there was little sweeping and cleaning; the beds were not made up for show, but were prepared for the gathering relatives. Grandfather Gaumer did not lie alone in the best room as John Hartman had lain; his children and his grandchildren went in and sat beside him and talked of him.

When the funeral was over and the house was in order and the relatives had gone, Katy sat on her little stool at her grandmother's knee and cried her fill. Grandmother Gaumer had not given way to grief. She had moved about among her kin, she had given directions, she had wept only a little.

To Katy there was not now a ray of brightness in the world.

"Nothing is certain," she mourned. "My gran'-pop brought me up. I was always by him, he was my father. I cannot get along without him."

"You will feel certain again of this world, Katy," her grandmother assured her. "You must not mourn for grandfather. He had a long, long life. You would not have him back where he would get lame and helpless after while. That is worse, Katy."

"But there are many things I would like to say to him. I never told him enough how thankful I was to him."

"He knew you were thankful. Now you are to go to school. Everything is to be just as it was planned."

Katy burst into tears once more.

"Ach, I do not think of school!"

Nevertheless, her heart beat a little faster. There was, after all, something right in the world. Moreover, she still had another person to think of. That day Alvin Koehler's dark eyes had looked down upon her as she sat by her grandmother in church. She had promised to help Alvin; his eyes reminded her consciously or unconsciously of her promise.

"Your Uncle Edwin and I talked this over," went on Grandmother Gaumer. "You have two hundred dollars from the governor in the bank in your name and the squire and Uncle Edwin and I will all help. You are to go right on, Katy."

"I was n't thinking about school," persisted Katy. "I was thinking about my grandfather."

Grandmother Gaumer laid a trembling hand on Katy's head.

"He was always good and kind, Katy, you must never forget that. He was first of all good; that is the best thing. He did what he could for everybody, and everybody loved him. You see what Millerstown thought of him. See that Millerstown thinks that well of you! You must never forget him, never. He loved you — he loved you —"

Grandmother Gaumer repeated what she had said in a strange way, then she ceased to speak, and Katy, startled, lifted her head. Then she got to her feet. She had become familiar in these last weeks with the gray pallor of a mortal seizure.

"Gran'mom!" shrieked Katy. "Gran'mom!"

Only the gaze of a pair of bright, troubled eyes answered her. Grandmother's face was twisted, her hands fell heavily into her lap.

Katy threw her arms round her and laid her cheek against the white hair.

"I will be back, dear, dear gran'mom," said Katy. "You know how I can run!"

An instant later, Katy had flung open the door of the squire's office where sat the squire and Dr. Benner. Her grandmother had insisted upon her putting on her red dress after the funeral. She paused now on the sill as she had paused in her bird-like attitude to call to Caleb Stemmel in the store at Christmas time. But this was a different Katy.

"Oh, come!" she cried. "Oh, come, come quickly!"

CHAPTER X

KATY MAKES A PROMISE

GRANDMOTHER GAUMER was not dead. When the squire and the doctor reached her side, she sat just as Katy left her, erect, motionless, bright-eyed. They put her to bed and there she lay with the same bright, helpless gaze.

"Can you understand me?" asked the doctor gently.

The expression in the brown eyes changed. The flash of perception was almost invisible, but it was there; to the eyes of Katy who stood by the bed, breathless, terrified, it was as welcome as the cry of a first-born child to its mother.

"She is conscious," the doctor assured them.

Uncle Edwin and Aunt Sally, whom Katy considered so dull, returned presently in tearful haste from their farm at the edge of the town. They sat with grandmother while the doctor gave directions for the night to Katy in the kitchen.

Katy looked at the doctor wildly. The lamp cast dark shadows into the corners of the room; it surrounded Katy with a glare of light. Her hands clasped and unclasped, tears rolled down her cheeks.

"Will my grandmother die?" asked Katy in a hollow voice.

Young Dr. Benner looked down upon her. He had not given so much thought of late to the development of his protégé. He had met in the county seat an older lady who had taken his fancy, who needed no improvement, and whose mind was already sufficiently developed to suit his ideas. He looked now at Katy through narrowed eyelids. He suddenly remembered the great plans he had had for her and the greater plans she had had for herself. He began to wonder what Katy's life would be like, he who had just a little while ago been planning it so carefully! He heard in that instant's pause a clear whistle from the direction of the garden, and he decided without knowing the identity of the whistler that there would sooner or later be that sort of complication in Katy's life which would end her education, even if her grandmother's need of her did not. He was so busy with his speculations that he did not answer Katy's question until she was faint with apprehension.

Katy was a sensitive creature; she was suddenly aware of the changed, absent way in which he regarded her. She remembered that it was a long time since the doctor had invited her to ride with him, a long time since he had said anything to her about singing.

"My gran'mom is all I have in this world," she reminded him with piteous dignity.

"No, Katy." The doctor came back to reality with a start. "She will not die."

His expression terrified Katy.

"Then, when will she be well again?"

"I cannot say."

The whistle sounded again from beyond the garden wall. This time it penetrated to the consciousness of Katy, who, hearing it, blushed. No one but Alvin Koehler could produce so sweet and clear a note. For the first time he had called her. The night was warm and bright, and the breeze carried the odor of honeysuckle and jasmine into the kitchen. The beauty of the night seemed mocking. Katy's heart cried out angrily against the trouble which had come upon her, against the greater grief which now threatened.

"You mean that she will be sick a long, long time?"

"Possibly."

Katy clasped and unclasped her hands.

"You do not mean that perhaps she will never be well?"

"I do not believe she can ever be well, Katy." The doctor now laid his hand on Katy's shoulder.

Katy moved away, her hand on her side, as if to sustain the weight of a heavy heart.

"What am I to do for her?"

The doctor gave directions about the medicines, and then went across the yard to sit with the squire in his office. When he had gone, Katy stood for a moment perfectly still in the middle of the room. The whistle did not come again; Alvin, approaching the house without knowing anything of Grandmother Gaumer's illness, saw suddenly that the house was more brightly lighted than usual and stole away.

For an instant Katy stood still, then she crossed the room and opened the door which led into the dim front of the house, and went into the parlor. There she sat down on the high, slippery haircloth sofa. Presently she turned her head and laid her cheek against the smooth, cool surface of the arm. Overhead she could hear the sound of Uncle Edwin's soft, heavy tread, the sound of his deep voice as he spoke to Grandmother Gaumer or to Aunt Sally. Uncle Edwin was a good man, Katy said to herself absently, her mind dwelling upon a theme in which it took at that moment no interest; Uncle Edwin was a good man, but he was not a very smart man. He had never gone to school — to school — Katy found herself repeating that magic word. It brought fully into the light of consciousness the dread question which had been lingering just outside. If Grandmother Gaumer were to be a long time sick, who would take care of her? Uncle Edwin and Aunt Sally were kind, but they had their farm on the outskirts of Millerstown; they could not leave it.

"But I must have my education," whispered Katy to the smooth surface of the old sofa. "This is my time in life for education. Afterwards the mind gets dull, and you cannot learn. It is right that I should have a chance to learn."

Then Katy sat up; from the room above Uncle

Edwin called her. "Ach, Katy, come once here!"

"I am coming," answered Katy as she flew.

In the sick-room her uncle and aunt welcomed her with relief. To them Katy was always a sort of wonder child. They had wanted to adopt her when she was a little girl; they had always loved her as they loved their own little Adam.

"We cannot make out what she wants, Katy. Perhaps it is you she wants."

Katy looked about the room, at the stout, disturbed uncle and aunt, then at the great bedstead, with its high feather bed, its plump pillows. Grandmother Gaumer's hair had been covered by a close-fitting cap; the sheet was drawn up under her chin; she seemed to have shrunk to a pair of eyes. But they were eyes into which the life of the body was concentrated. Katy almost covered her own as she met them, her throat contracted, all emotions combined into one overwhelming sensation.

"I will stay here now," announced Katy. "Aunt Sally, you can go home, and Uncle Edwin, if he is to stay all night here, can go to bed, and if I need anything I will call him."

Thus Katy, the dictator. When they had obeyed, Katy crossed the room to her grandmother's side. To such an interview as this there could be no witnesses.

"No one else is going to take care of you, gran'-mom," promised Katy. "No one can travel so fast and talk so much." She leaned over and laid her hand on her grandmother's cheek. "I am going to stay with you to-night and to-morrow night and always. I am never going to leave you. I care for schooling, but I care more for you. You raised me from little when I had no father and mother to take care of me. I will remember what you said about gran'pop, and I will try to be like him. *Do you understand me?*" besought Katy in a sudden agony of fright.

The brown eyes answered, or Katy thought they answered.

"Well, then," said Katy. "Now I will read you a chapter and then you will go to sleep."

CHAPTER XI

KATY FINDS A NEW AIM IN LIFE

It was on Tuesday evening that Grandmother Gaumer was smitten and Alvin Koehler whistled in the garden. On Wednesday Millerstown flocked to the Gaumer house with inquiries and gifts. They all saw Grandmother Gaumer, according to Millerstown's custom in sickness, then they went down to the kitchen to hear from Bevy an account of this amazing seizure. Sarah Ann Mohr, who was one of grandmother's oldest friends, brought fresh pie and many tears. Susannah Kuhns promised fresh bread in the afternoon, and Sarah Knerr carried off the washing.

Then Sarah Ann, accustomed to hear with admiration and wonder the problems which Katy put to a puzzled Mr. Carpenter, and expecting, with the rest of the community, that she would bring extraordinary honor to Millerstown, asked Bevy Schnepp a question.

"My mom was taken that a way," she explained, tearfully. "For seven years she laid and did n't speak and toward the end she had n't her mind any more. Who will take care of gran'mom? Will Edwin and Sally move home or will they get some one from outside?"

Bevy stood beside the sink, her arms akimbo.

"Gran'mom is n't sure to lie seven years," said she. Bevy had in her possession the seventh book of Moses, which contained many powerful prescriptions; she meant to see what pow-wowing could do before she despaired of Grandmother Gaumer. "But if she does lay, Edwin won't come home and they won't get anybody from outside. It was never yet a Gaumer what had to be taken care of by one from outside. Katy will take care of her gran'-mom."

"Katy will take care of her gran'mom!" repeated Sarah Ann. "But she won't be well till [by] September! How will Katy then be educated? Carpenter has learned her everything he knows in this world. I could easy hear that!"

"Katy does not think of education," answered Bevy. "She thinks of nothing but her gran'mom. She is with her night and day."

Solemnly Sarah Ann and Bevy regarded one another. Then solemnly they nodded.

"That is what I said to Millerstown!" Thus Sarah Ann in triumph. "There are those in Millerstown who will have it that Katy will let her gran'-mom stick. There are those in Millerstown who say that when people get education, they get crazy. Did she cry, Bevy?"

"Not that I saw," answered Bevy, proudly. "Or that any one else saw, I guess."

"I will tell Millerstown," Sarah Ann made ready to depart. "It is three places where I will stop already on my way home."

Ponderously, satisfied with her darling, Sarah Ann moved through the door.

Among the numerous visitors was Essie Hill, who had recently experienced the sudden and violent change of heart which admitted her to full membership in the Improved New Mennonite Church. She wore now a little short back sailor like the older women, with an inscription across the front to the effect that she was a worker in the vineyard. Essie was sincere; she was good, but Katy hated her. When she told Essie, not without a few impertinent embroideries, that her grandmother was asleep, Essie departed with a quiet acceptance of the rebuff which no Millerstonian would have endured without resentment. Essie's placid soul, however, was not easily disturbed. She performed her duty in offering to sit by Grandmother Gaumer and to read and pray with her; further she was not obligated.

Katy heard no more Alvin's clear whistle in the garden. She said to herself, in a moment of physical and mental depression, that he might easily have made a way to see her by coming with the rest of Millerstown to inquire for the invalid; then she reminded herself that the Koehlers went nowhere, had no friends.

"He is ashamed of his pop," said Katy to herself. "His pop is a black shame to him."

On Thursday she left her grandmother while she went on an errand to the store and her eyes searched every inch of Main Street and the two shorter streets which ran into it. But Alvin was nowhere to be seen. She answered shortly the questions about her grandmother, put to her by the storekeeper and by all other persons whom she met, and returned to the house in despair.

"If I could only see him," she cried to herself. "If I could only talk to him a little!"

On Sunday evening Bevy drove her out, almost by force, to the front porch. Bevy's preacher was again holding services in the next village, and Bevy was therefore free to care for the invalid. She had sought all the week an opportunity to sit by Grandmother Gaumer and to repeat the pow-wow rhymes which she firmly believed would help her. Now, sitting at the head of the bed in the dusk, she made passes in the air with her hands and motions with her lips. When she was certain that Grandmother Gaumer slept, she slid down to her hands and knees and crept three times round the bed, repeating the while some mystic rhyme. In reality, Grandmother Gaumer did not sleep, but lay amusedly conscious of the administrating of Bevy's therapeutic measures.

Meanwhile Katy was not alone. Had Bevy suspected the company into which she was sending her beloved, it is probable that one spring would have carried her down the steps, and another to the porch.

Katy sat for a long time on the step with her chin in her hands. She was thin, her eyes were unnaturally large, the hard work of nursing had worn her out. Her gaze searched the street, and she shrank into the shadow of the honeysuckle vine when couples paraded slowly by, arm in arm.

"I have nobody," mourned Katy, weakly, to herself. "Nobody in all the world but my gran'mom, and she cannot even speak to me."

After a long time Katy's sharp gaze detected a lurking figure across the street. Her heart throbbed, she leaned forward out of the shadow of the vine. Then she called a soft "Alvin!"

Alvin came promptly across and Katy made room for him beside her. He wore his new red tie, but his face as the light from the street lamp fell upon it was far from happy.

"Is your gran'mom yet sick?" he asked.

"Yes." Katy could answer only in a monosyllable. Alvin was here, he sat beside her, the skirt of her dress rested against him.

"I was here once in the garden, and I whistled for you. I did not know your gran'mom was sick."

"I heard it, but I could n't come." The two voices had all the tones of deep tragedy. "It was when my gran'mom was first taken sick." Katy felt suddenly tired and weak, but she was very happy. She noticed now the odor of honeysuckle and the sweeter jasmine out on the garden wall. It was a beautiful world.

After a long time Alvin spoke again, still unhappily.

"David Hartman is going away to school."

Katy's heart gave a jealous throb. It was not fair for any one to have an education when she could not.

"He is going right away to the real college."

"He cannot!" said Katy. "He cannot pass the examination. He is no farther than I and I could n't get in the real college. I guess we have catalogues that tell about it!"

"But there is a young fellow here to teach him this summer, so he can get in. His mother is willing for him to go. Some say that David has already his own money. It costs a lot of money to get such a young man. He gets more than Carpenter got, they say. He is living at the hotel because it is too clean at the Hartmans' for strangers. David goes to him at the hotel. They say he will learn to be a lawyer so that he can take care of his money. And the tailor" — the spaces between Alvin's words grew wider and wider, his voice rose and fell almost as though he were chanting — "the tailor is making new clothes for him, and his mom bought him a trunk in Allentown!"

"So!" said Katy, scornfully, the blood beating in her temples. She did not envy David his clothes, but she envied him his learning. Katy was desperately tired; a noble resolve, though persisted in bravely, does not keep one constantly cheerful and courageous.

"And he sits on the porch in the evenings sometimes with Essie Hill."

"He has good company! It is queer for such an educated one to like such a dumb one! Perhaps Essie will get him to convert himself. She was here to get me to convert myself. She says it is while I am wicked that this trouble comes upon me. She wanted to sit by my gran'mom and talk about my gran'mom's sins, and I told her my gran'mom had n't as many sins in her whole life as she had already." Katy could not suppress a giggle. "That settled her. I would n't even let her go up. I wanted to choke her."

Again Katy sat silently. Alvin was here, she was consuming the time in foolish talk; at any minute Bevy might descend from above or they might be interrupted by a visitor. Alvin moved uneasily. Perhaps he, too, felt this talk to be foolish. The light fell full upon his red tie and the beautiful line of his young throat. A more mature and experienced person than Katy Gaumer would have been certain that there must be good in a creature so beautiful.

"David can go to college," he said mournfully. "But I cannot go anywhere, not even to the normal school where I could learn to be a teacher. I thought I would surely get that much of an education, but there is no hope for me."

Katy turned and looked at him. "Why no hope?"

"Why, they say in Millerstown that you are not going to school. You said that when you went to school you would find a way for me to go. But if you are not going, then there is no one to help me. And pop" — Alvin's lapses into the vernacular were frequent — "pop gets worse and worse. He is going very fast behind. He is getting so he has queer ideas. He was making him shoelaces with the ravelings of the carpet. And he thinks there is now a woman with horns after him. He talks about it all the time. I have nothing in this world. When he was so bad I came to tell you. It was then I whistled."

"You do not need any one at the school to help you," said Katy in a clear voice. "If I am not going, I can all the better help you to go; don't you see that, Alvin? If you are going to teach, you do not have to pay anything except for board and room. I have two hundred dollars in the bank, and I can lend you some to begin with and then you can get something to do. I will give you fifty dollars" — poor Katy planned as though she had thousands. "There is a little hole round the corner of the house in the wall, where Bevy used to put the cakes for me. There I will put the money for you, Alvin."

Alvin's lips parted. He felt not so much gratitude as amazement.

"Are n't you going to school *ever?*"

Katy did not answer.

"Millerstown will be crazy when it finds I am going away!" cried Alvin with delight.

"They must never know how you go!" said Katy in alarm. "You must not tell them how you go!"

"They think my father has money." Here was a solution. "They do not know he has given it all to detectives. They think he has it hidden away. Millerstown is very dumb."

"You must get a catalogue from the school, Alvin, and you must send in your name. That is the first."

"I will," promised Alvin. "I will do it right away. It is a loan, Katy, and I will pay it back. It will not be hard to earn the money to pay it back!"

The sound of a descending footstep on the stairway frightened them, as though they had been plotting evil. Alvin went swiftly and quietly out the brick walk, and Katy sat still. When Bevy came to the kitchen door, Katy sat on the lowest step, where Bevy had left her, her elbows on her knees, her chin in her hands.

"You are not to come in yet," said Bevy. "I just came to get a drink. Your gran'mom is sleeping."

"Yes, well," answered Katy, keeping her voice steady by great effort. She did not wish to move. She wished to think and think. If Alvin had omitted an expression of thanks, she held no grudge against him, had not, indeed, even observed the omission. Here was an outlet from prison; here was something to be, to do! She would cheerfully have earned by the labor of her hands enough to send Alvin Koehler to school. After such a foolish, generous pattern was Katy made in her youth; thus, lightly, with a beating, happy heart, did she put herself in bondage.

"I will educate Alvin," said Katy. "If I cannot do one thing, I can do another."

Alvin Koehler climbed the hill. His heart did not throb as rapidly as Katy's, but Alvin, too, was very happy. Alvin was not yet possessed by an overwhelming desire for an education; but he saw a new suit and at least three neckties. Above that delectable goal, his ambition did not rise.

When he reached the little white house on the hillside and lifted the latch of the door, he could not get in. After he had pounded and called, his terror growing each moment greater, he tried the window. From there his father's strong hands pushed him so suddenly that he fell on his back into the soft soil of the garden. Poor William Koehler had come to confuse the woman with horns with his harmless son.

Terrified, Alvin retraced his steps to the village and sought the squire. In the morning, the squire, with gentle persuasion, carried poor William to the county home. There William was kept at first in a cell, with a barred window; then he was allowed to work in the fields under guard. Gradually, the woman with horns vanished; his work with his familiar tools and with the plants which he loved seemed to have a healing effect. He grew more and more quiet; presently he ceased to pray aloud in his frantic way. He said after a while that God had told him to be quiet. He seemed to have forgotten his home, his child, his old life, even his enemy.

CHAPTER XII

KATY BORROWS SO THAT SHE MAY LEND

In June Grandmother Gaumer was smitten; in September Alvin was to go away; the months between were not unhappy for Katy. Occasionally Alvin came and sat with her on the porch in the darkness. It was tacitly agreed that they should not be seen together. Public opinion in Millerstown was less favorable than ever to Alvin since his father's removal to the poorhouse was coincident with Alvin's elaborate preparations for school. Alvin could not wait for the slow operations of a tailor; he went at once to Allentown and purchased a suit; the fifty dollars which he found at the time appointed in the putlock hole remained intact no longer than the time consumed in making the journey. Millerstown was certain that Alvin had found his father's hoarded wealth, and speculated wildly about its possible size.

"Koehler was working all these many years," said Susannah Kuhns. "He had all the time his place free on the hill. Alvin will have enough money for education, of that you may be sure."

"But can he take education?" asked the puzzled Sarah Ann. "The Koehlers were always wonderful dumb. There was once a Koehler whose name was

Abraham and he wrote it always 'Aprom,' and one made a cupboard and nailed himself in and they had to come and let him out. They are a dumb Freundschaft. They are bricklayers and carpenters; they are not educated men. Now, with Katy it is different. She has a squire and a governor in her Freundschaft."

"I don't believe he got all this money from his pop," protested Bevy. "There are other ways of getting money. It says in the Bible, 'Like father, like son.'"

"He parades up and down like a Fratzhans [dude] in his new clothes," said Susannah.

"Ach, Susannah!" reproved gentle Sarah Ann, in whose judgment criticism had now gone far enough.

Such speculations and accusations Katy had more than once to hear. Then Katy clenched her hands. They would see Alvin come back to Millerstown some day a great man. She hated Susannah and Bevy and all Alvin's detractors. Never was Katy doubtful for an instant of her undertaking; she had succeeded with the Christmas entertainment; she had succeeded in compelling Mr. Carpenter to teach her; she was succeeding now in doing all the work in her grandmother's house; she would succeed in educating Alvin.

"Sarah Ann is a great, fat worm," said Katy with scorn. "When the brains were given out, Sarah Ann was missed. And Bevy is a little grasshopper and she, too, is dumb. It is a great pity for them."

She wished that she might see Alvin oftener, but that was impossible. He was near at hand; she could get occasional glimpses of him, and she could sit by her grandmother's bed and think of him. She had put her precious fifty dollars in the putlock hole and Alvin had removed it. It must be confessed that between the time Katy promised and the time that she deposited the money, Alvin came more than once after night to feel round in the improvised bank. The gift constituted now in Katy's mind an unbreakable bond between them. Such largess would have inspired her to lay down her life for the giver, and Alvin was endowed in her mind with gifts and graces far greater and nobler than her own. At the garments which he bought she looked with tender approval. Certainly he could not go to the normal school without suitable clothes!

Besides Katy's clearly expressed conviction that it was unwise for Alvin to come to see her, there was another reason why Alvin did not turn his steps oftener to Grandmother Gaumer's gate. Alvin's new clothes put him temporarily into a condition bordering upon insanity. He must show himself in his fine apparel. He would have liked to appear in it each evening, but such a performance was unthinkable. Only on Saturday and Sunday did Millerstown wear its best.

On Saturday and Sunday, therefore, Alvin lived.

He attended ice-cream festivals and Sunday School picnics; he went diligently to church, selecting each Sunday the one of Millerstown's churches which was likely to have the largest attendance. When the Lutherans had a Children's Day service, Alvin went early to get a good seat. Often he sat in the Amen corner, close to the little cupboard with the space of smooth, gray wall beside it. Upon the smooth, gray wall his profile and curly head cast a beautiful shadow. When there was a revival service at the church of the Improved New Mennonites, Alvin was in the congregation. There he was conscious of the demure eyes of Essie Hill. Essie was always alone. David Hartman, who sat with her on the doorstep, never was seen inside her church. To David revivals, such as enlivened many of the meetings of the Improved New Mennonites, were intolerable; they made him feel as he had felt at his father's funeral with the gaze of all Millerstown searching his soul. Between Essie and her father there had occurred a short conversation about David and his worldly ways.

"You can never marry outside your church, Essie," said grave, sober Mr. Hill.

"No, pop," agreed Essie. "Such a thing I would not do."

Alvin Koehler would have had no objection to a scrutiny of his soul. To Alvin, all of himself was interesting.

Alvin did not think often of his father. By this time William was trusted to work in the almshouse fields, and was allowed to talk from morning till night of his wrongs.

Early in September Alvin went away. He came on the last Saturday evening to say good-bye to Katy and they sat together on the dusky porch. The porch was darker than it had been in the springtime, since the hand which usually pruned the vines was no longer able to hold the shears. There were still a few sprays of bloom on the honeysuckle and the garden was in its greatest glory. There bloomed scarlet sage and crimson cock's-comb and another more brilliant, leafy plant, red from root to tip. Among the stalks of the spring flowers twined now nasturtiums and petunias, and there was sweet alyssum and sweet William and great masses of cosmos and asters. In the moonlight Katy could see a plant move gently; even in her sadness she could not resist a spasm of pleasure as a rabbit darted out from behind it. On the brick wall between the porch and the garden stood Grandmother Gaumer's thorny, twisted night-blooming cactus with great swollen buds ready to open to-morrow evening. The air had changed; it was no longer soft and warm as it had been the night when Katy first planned to educate Alvin.

Sitting by her grandmother's bed Katy had finished her red dress with the ruffles. It had been necessary to make the hem an inch longer than they had planned in the spring. Grandmother Gaumer's patient eyes had seemed to smile when Katy showed her. Grandmother Gaumer was shown everything; to her bedside Bevy bore proudly Katy's first successful baking of bread; thither to-morrow, Uncle Edwin would carry the great cactus in its heavy tub.

Katy sat for a long time on the step before Alvin came. Her body softened and weakened a dozen times as she thought she heard his step, then her muscles stiffened and her hands clenched as the step passed by. Presently it would be time for Bevy to go home and for Katy to go into the house, or presently some one would come, and then her chance to see Alvin would be gone. It seemed to her that Bevy looked at her with suspicion when Alvin's name was mentioned; the later it grew the more likely Bevy was to interrupt their interview.

The grip of Katy's hands, one upon the other, grew tighter, her cheeks hotter, the beating of her heart more rapid. He must come; it was incredible that he could stay away. Her throat tightened; she said over and over to herself, "Oh, come! come! come!"

Presently down the dusky street approached Alvin with his swinging walk. Now Katy knew at last that she was not mistaken. He was here; he was entering the gate which she had opened so that its loud creak might not be heard by Bevy; he was walking softly on the grass as Katy had advised him.

Alvin sat down a little closer to Katy than was his custom. A subtle change had come over him. Though the Millerstown boys looked at him with scorn, the Millerstown girls, smiling upon him, had completed the work which Katy's attentions had begun. Alvin had not attended Sunday School picnics, with their games of Copenhagen and their long walks home in the twilight, for nothing. Alvin had less and less desire for learning; he still thought of education as a path to even finer clothes than he had and greater admiration and entire ease. He had come now from service at the Lutheran church, and from his favorite corner he had been conscious of the notice of the congregation. He had asked Katy for twenty-five dollars more than she had given him; this, Katy told him, lay now in the putlock hole in the house wall. His spirits rose still more gayly as he heard of it.

"I will pay it back in a year or two," he assured Katy lightly. "Then I will tell you how to do when you go to school."

"Yes," said Katy. She would have liked to say, "Oh, Alvin, keep it, keep it forever!" But how then should she attain to an equality with Alvin? She realized now fully that he was going away. The long, long winter was fast approaching, and she would be here alone in this changed house. There would be no more entertainments; there would be no more frantic racing with Whiskey; there would be no more glorifying, sustaining hope.

Slowly the tears rolled down Katy's cheeks. She knew that the minutes were passing rapidly, and that she and Alvin had said nothing. But still she sat with her hands pressed against her eyes.

Almost immediately, alas! there was an alarming sound. The step of Bevy was heard descending the stairway. Poor Katy could cheerfully have slain her. A hundred confused thoughts filled her mind, the tears came faster than ever; she rose, and Alvin rose with her and they looked at each other, and then Alvin was gone. In his excitement he closed the gate noisily behind him. Katy sank down again on the step from which she had risen. When Bevy looked out from the doorway, Katy sat motionless.

"You ought to come in, Katy," advised Bevy. "It is cold."

"I am not cold," said Katy.

"It is damp and cold," insisted Bevy. "I thought I heard the gate slam."

Katy made no answer.

"Did it slam?" asked Bevy.

Katy looked round. Her eyes were bright; her voice, if it trembled, did not tremble with grief. "If you heard it, I guess it slammed," said she.

"The night air is bad." Bevy was losing patience. "*Will* you come in?"

"No," said Katy.

Bevy snapped the screen door shut.

"Je gelehrter, je verkehrter" (The more learned, the more perverse), she declared.

When Bevy had reached the upper hall, Katy rose from her place on the lowest step, and stretched out her arms as though to embrace the garden and Millerstown and the world. Mist was rising from the little stream below the orchard; it veiled the garden in a lovely garment; it seemed to intensify the odor of the honeysuckle and the late roses. Again Katy sank down on the step and hid her face in her arms.

"He kissed me!" said Katy shamelessly.

Now Katy's winter was guarded against unhappiness.

A little later in September David Hartman went to school also, not to the normal school where tuition cost nothing, but to college as befitted the heir of a rich man. His tutor had prepared him thoroughly for his examinations; he had an ample allowance; there was no reason why the gratification of any legitimate desire should be denied him. His mother had spared no pains with his outfit; she had bought and sewed and laundered and packed a wardrobe such as, it is safe to say, no other student in the college possessed. During the long summer she and David had had little to say to each other. David had been constantly busy with his books; he had had little time even to think of his father, whom he so passionately regretted. Death continued to work its not uncommon miracle for John Hartman; it dimmed more and more for his son the character of his later years, and exaggerated greatly the vaguely remembered tendernesses of David's babyhood. John Hartman had to an increasing degree in his death what he had not had in life, the affection and admiration of his boy. How was it possible for him to be anything else but silent with a wife so cold, so immovable, so strange? David was certain that he had solved his father's problem. Sometimes David could not bear to look at his mother.

But now that he was going away, David's eyes were somewhat sharpened. His mother looked thin and bent and tired; she seemed to have grown old while she sewed for him.

"You ought to get you a girl," he said with the colossal stupidity of youth and of the masculine mind.

Mrs. Hartman looked at him, as though she were suddenly startled. He seemed to have grown tall overnight; his new clothes had made a man of him. Then a film covered her eyes, as though she withdrew from the suggestions of lunacy into some inward sanctuary where burned the lamp of wisdom.

"A girl!" cried Cassie, as though the suggestion were monstrous. "To have her spoil my things! A girl!"

David's trunk was packed in the kitchen, thither his hat and satchel were brought also. When his breakfast was over he went down the street to the preacher's for a letter recommending his character. When he returned, his trunk and satchel had been sent to the station; he had now only to take his hat and say good-bye to his mother who was at this moment in the deep cellar. For her David waited awkwardly. He remembered how he had stood kicking his foot against the door sill on Christmas Day — how many years and years ago it seemed!

Now, as then, David experienced a softening of the heart. He forgot his resentment against his mother's coldness, against her strange passion for material things. She was his mother, she was all he had in the world, and he was going away from her and from his home. He heard her ascending the cellar steps, and he turned and went up to his room as though he had forgotten something, so that he might hide his tears.

At the entrance of the little hall which led to his room, David stood still, the lump hardening in his throat, his breath drawn heavily. His errand to the preacher's had not taken half an hour, but in that half-hour his room had been dismantled. The cheap little bed had been taken apart and had been carried into the hall; the carpet had been dropped out of the window to the grass below; broom and scrubbing-brush and pail waited in the corner. The door of his mother's room opposite his own was closed; a dust cloth was stuffed under it so that no mote could enter. Now, all the rooms in Cassie's house except the kitchen and her own could be immaculate.

For a long moment David stood still. He looked into his room, he looked at his mother's closed door, he looked at the door which shut off the deep front of the great house. He felt the same mysterious impression which Katy Gaumer felt when she looked at the outside of the Hartman house, as though it held within it strange secrets. It seemed now as though it thrust him forth as one who did not belong, as though its walls might presently contract until there should be no space for him to stand. It was a cruel suggestion to a boy about to leave his home! David breathed deeply as though to shake off the oppression, and then went down the steps.

Without apparent emotion he bade Cassie farewell, then strode briskly toward the station. Essie Hill, who let him sit beside her on the doorstep and who argued prettily with him about his soul, was nowhere to be seen; his companions, Ollie Kuhns and Billy Knerr and the Fackenthals, were at work or at school; Bevy Schnepp, whose great favorite he was, was busy with her washing in the squire's yard far up the street. In the door of the store stood Katy Gaumer. Her, with Alvin Koehler, he hated. David had with his own eyes beheld one of Alvin's hasty departures from Grandmother Gaumer's gate. Persons found their levels in this world and Katy had found hers.

But on the corner David hesitated. How tall she had grown! How large her eyes were, and how lacking in their old sparkle! Cheerfully would he have returned in this final moment of madness to the dullness of the Millerstown school to be near her once more, cheerfully would he have continued his abode in Millerstown forever. He determined to go to speak to her, to say, "Let us be friends." Essie Hill was pretty and sweet, and her anxiety about his soul was flattering, but Essie was like a candle to a shining star. He saw the flirt of Katy's red dress as she sailed up the schoolroom aisle; he heard her saucy answers to the teacher; he admired her gayety, her great ambition. She had planned by now to be at school, learning everything; instead, she wore a gingham apron and stood in the Millerstown store buying a broom!

A single step David had already taken, when Katy turned from her bargaining and their eyes met. Katy knew whither David was bound; already his train whistled faintly at the next station. It seemed to her that he looked at her with pity. He was to go, and she was to stay — forever! With bitterness Katy turned her back upon him.

For a year Grandmother Gaumer lay high upon her pillows, her patient eyes looking out from her paralyzed body upon her friends and her quiet room. Presently she was able to lift her hands and to say a few slow and painful words. Her bed had been moved to the parlor; from here she could look up and down the street, and out to the kitchen upon Katy at her work. A trolley line was being built to connect Millerstown with the county seat; she could see the workmen approaching across the flat meadows, and after a while could watch with a thrill a faint, distant gleam of light broaden into the glare of a great headlight as the car whizzed into the village. Her face grew thinner and more delicate; her survival came presently to seem almost a miracle. But still she lay patiently, listening to the storms and rejoicing in the sunshine. To her Katy read the Bible, hour after hour, a dull experience to the mind of Bevy, devout Improved New Mennonite though she was.

"You are an old woman," protested Bevy. "You are older than I in your ways. Run with Whiskey a little like you used to run! I could be much oftener here, and the other people would be glad to sit with gran'mom. I even put cakes for you in the hole and you don't take them out any more!"

Katy was really very happy during the long winter. Housekeeping had become easy; she would accept no help even with washing and cleaning. As for going about in Millerstown, Katy laughed, as neat, aproned in housewifely fashion, she sat by her grandmother's bed.

"Shall I go now to quiltings and surprise parties when I would not go before? I am not interested in those things."

Often there was time in the long afternoons for Katy to sit with her books. She knew what Alvin was studying; it was easy at first to keep up with him. She enjoyed the sense of importance which her position as head of the house gave her. Sarah Ann dissolved in tears as she praised her; Uncle Edwin and Aunt Sally made much of her. And how much more important was she than any of them knew!

Alvin was doing well at school, at least so Alvin wrote. When trouble came, she would have Alvin to fly to. When her tasks seemed a burden, or when studying without a teacher became difficult, or when the winter storms shook the house, she remembered how he had kissed her. The complication which Dr. Benner had feared for Katy had arrived. Dr. Benner was by this time married; in the glamour in which he lived, he was unconscious of the existence of Katy except as a person of whom questions must occasionally be asked, to whom directions must sometimes be given. His wife was not pleasant and "common"; she was "proud"; she gave Millerstown to understand that as soon as she could persuade her husband to buy a practice in a more cultivated community, they would leave.

At Christmas time Alvin did not come home, but went instead to visit a schoolmate. If he had come, there would have been no place for him to stay. The little house on the mountain-side was cold and deserted; it would probably never be occupied again. Alvin wrote occasionally to Katy and Katy wrote regularly to him. It was not to be expected that he should neglect his work to write letters. Fortunately the Millerstown post-office was presided over at present by old man Fackenthal, who did not scrutinize addresses with undue closeness. Nevertheless, Katy disguised her own hand and dropped her letters into the slit in the door at night.

David returned at Christmas time with an added inch of height, with straighter shoulders and a sterner glance. David moved swiftly, answered questions directly, walked alone upon the mountain-side, or sat with his books in his mother's kitchen. He seemed to have had some improving, enlightening experience; college had already done a great deal for him. Him Katy did not see.

Nor did Alvin appear in the summer time, except for a few days at the end. He had asked Katy for another fifty dollars in the spring, and she had sent it to him without stopping to consider that now more than half of her money was gone. Alvin meant to work in a drug store this summer, at least so Alvin said, in order to pay part of his debt. But the dispensing of soda water did not appear to have been as profitable as he expected, for in August, when he came to Millerstown, he borrowed another fifty dollars. He promised certainly now that he would come for Christmas. He put his arms boldly round Katy and kissed her many times. It seemed that Alvin, too, had had illuminating experiences.

David spent the summer in his little room and on the mountain-side. David sometimes lay for hours together on the plateau before the Sheep Stable. Sometimes he carried thither the books which he continued to study diligently. Sometimes he walked about, climbing among rocks, tramping along the arched back of the little range of hills, — mountains, to Millerstown. David sighed contentedly and breathed deeply. He noted the dappled shadows, the wreathing clematis, the tall spikes of lobelia, the odor of slippery elm the first reddening branch of the gum trees. He looked down upon the fertile fields, upon the scattered villages, and he was almost happy. Then David returned to his books. It was strange that he should study so earnestly during the long summer. Surely David with his good mind had not fallen behind his fellows!

David's illuminating experiences had not been entirely those which study and knowledge bring. David's arrival in the college town had been at once observed and marked. He towered above his fellows; he had a look of greater maturity than his years would warrant; he had apparently large means at his command. Upper classmen are not so entirely devoted as is supposed to the abuse of the entering novice. Upon the novice depends the continued existence of the college society which is so important a part of the college's social structure. You cannot very well urge a man to join an organization of which you are a member after you have beaten him or held his head under an icy hydrant! David's college made a tacit but no less real distinction between the youth who was likely to prove valuable society material and the youth who would likely prove to be merely a student. David's clothes were of the best, he had many of them, he occupied an expensive room; it was evident that he need not have recourse to the many shifts by which the poor boy in college provides himself with spending money. David was overlooked in the disciplinary measures by which many of his classmates were trained to respect their betters. His discipline was, alas! much harder to endure!

He accepted in his silent way the attentions which were showered upon him, the drives, the treats, the introductions to foolish young ladies whose eyes spoke their admiration. David was bewildered and embarrassed, and David for a time wisely remained silent. There was no reason to think that David had not been brought up in the politest of society. But, finally, alas! David spoke.

It was not often that a student had a party given especially for him. But, as the seven villages struggled for the honor of the birth of Homer, so the college societies longed for the honor of possessing David. Finally all but two dropped out of the race. David had not committed himself to either, but it was understood that in accepting the proffered entertainment he was practically making his decision.

The great evening approached; the great guest in his fine apparel, another new suit, now a dress suit made by the college tailor, appeared at his party. The prettiest girl of all appointed herself his companion, and to him addressed a pretty remark.

"We are glad to have you here at college, Mr. Hartman."

Then David spoke. The prettiness of the girl, the formality of her address, the bright lights, his conspicuous position — all combined in David's downfall. David did not speak naturally as he spoke now; David had no trouble with *th*, David knew the English idiom; David knew better, oh, much, much better. But poor David reverted to type.

"I sank myself," said David amid a great and growing hush. Then David walked out, away from the pretty girl, away from the bright lights, away, forever, from the organization which had sought him. Overwhelmed with embarrassment, outraged, David sought his room and his books. David could never be persuaded to return to the society in which he had been thus humiliated; he never emerged again from his room or his books except to recite or to walk or to go to his meals or to church. He henceforth lived alone. He discovered that by diligent study he could accomplish in three years what he had expected would require four. The sooner he was out of this place the better. He went weekly to a neighboring city, and there, finding a teacher of elocution, conquered, he was sure forever, that damning trick of speech. He grew handsomer; he filled his room with beautiful furniture and many books; his allowance assumed in the eyes of his college mates the proportions of a fortune in itself. But David could not be induced to forget. David lost much, but David in his sullen hermitage remained decent and unspoiled.

Once or twice in the summer he sat with Essie on her doorstep. Essie was prettier than ever; she still besought him to be "plain." David laughed at her and teased her; she was really the only person in the world with whom he laughed. His mother's strength seemed to have failed; often she lay down on the settle before it was dark, but only when she fell asleep did David find her in this ignominious position. If she heard a step she sprang up, as though she had committed a crime.

Once more Christmas approached and passed. This time again there was no visiting governor, no great feast, no entertainment. Again Alvin did not come home; he did not now write a letter or send a gift. Grandmother Gaumer was worse; the patience in her eyes had changed to a great weariness; she had ceased to be able to move or to speak.

In March there came a great storm. It extinguished all the village lamps; it whirled across the broad breast of the mountain, sending to the ground with a mighty crash, unheard of man, many trees; it beat against the Gaumer house, which seemed to tremble. In spite of the storm, however, Katy put on her scarlet shawl and went to the post-office, as of old. But in those days there had been no such feverish haste as this!

Her grandmother looked at her for a moment as she stood by the bed and tried to smile. Then Katy went out, her skirts flying in the wind, the rain beating in her face. She plodded along as best she could, without the old sensation of a viking breasting an angry sea.

At the post-office she found a letter, and there stopped to read it because she could not wait.

"Dear, dear Katy!" With what a wild thrill Katy beheld the opening words. Then Katy read on. "I am in great trouble, Katy. For some time I have not had enough money to get along, and now I must have fifty dollars. Oh, Katy, try and get it for me! Oh, I don't know what will happen, Katy. Oh, please, Katy!"

Katy read the letter through twice; then she stood gaping. Old man Fackenthal spoke to her and she answered without knowing what she said; then she went out and stood in the rain, trying to think. She had no money; her last cent had been given to Alvin in the fall. But Alvin had appealed to her to help; it was — oh, poor Katy! — an honor to be thus solicited. No one else could help him; he would go to no one else in the world.

Like a shock of cold water upon an exhausted body, fell Alvin's request upon Katy's weary, tired soul. When the necessity for an English entertainment was made clear to Katy, plans were immediate, execution prompt. Katy had known at once what she would do. She forgot now that she had no way of earning money; she did not anticipate that to her honest soul the burden of a debt would be almost as great as the burden of remembered theft. Boldly she presented herself to the squire in his office and there made her request. Nothing was plain to Katy except Alvin's bitter need.

The squire looked at her in astonishment.

"That is a good deal of money, Katy!" But the squire had seen Katy at her books. "You need books, I suppose, and things to wear. I see you studying and sewing, Katy. You are not to slip back in your studies before you go away."

"I will give you a paper and I will pay interest," promised Katy, who did not wish to discuss the spending of the money.

The squire went slowly to his safe. It must be very dismal for the child. His poor sister-in-law was not likely to improve, and she might, alas! be a long time dying. If the situation were not changed by fall, the child must be sent away and Edwin must come home to live. He remembered his own bright little sister; he remembered the plans of all the family for Katy. A sudden remorseful consciousness that they had forgotten Katy, and that they had left a good many burdens on her shoulders, moved him to give her the foolish sum for which she asked.

"This I *give* you, Katy," said he as he counted the money into her hand. It was not strange that the squire had taken so few journeys.

"No," protested Katy with a scarlet face; it is a debt."

Recklessly Katy slipped the money into an envelope and mailed it, and Alvin, receiving it, wept for joy and thought with gratitude of the sender. The small part of it which he did not have to use to pay his most pressing debts he spent upon a girl from the county seat, one Bessie Brown, who had visited a friend at the normal school, and for whom he had great admiration.

CHAPTER XIII

EMPTINESS

THE great March storm seemed to clear the way for an early spring. The winter had been unusually cold and long; even honeysuckle and ivy vines were winter-killed. The great old honeysuckle vine on the Gaumer porch died down to the ground and hung a mass of brown stems, through which the wind blew with a crackling sound. Day after day Millerstown had had to thaw out its pumps. To Sarah Ann Mohr, who had once read an account on the inside pages of the Millerstown "Star" of the delicate balance of meteorological conditions, the signs were ominous.

"It means something," insisted Sarah Ann. "Once when my mom was little they had such a winter and then the snow fell in June on the wheat. The wheat was already in the head when the snow fell on it. If it gets only a little colder than that, the people die."

But spring returned. Sarah Ann beheld with a thankful heart the hyacinths and narcissus in her flower beds pushing their heads through the soil, the rhubarb sprouting in her garden; she breathed in with unspeakable delight the first balmy breeze. Sarah Ann's friends were slipping rapidly away from her; she was one of the last survivors of her generation; but her appetite was still good, her step firm, her eye bright. Sarah Ann was a devout and trustful Christian, but she had never been able to understand why a heaven had not been provided on the beautiful earth for those who were worthy.

The dogwood put out earlier than usual its shelf-like boughs of bloom; before the end of April bluets starred the meadows round the Weygandt dam, and everywhere there was the scent of apple blossoms. Grandmother Gaumer's garden, with its vine-covered wall, its box-bordered paths, its innumerable varieties of flowers, was a place of magic. Though its mistress was away, it had never been so beautiful, so sweet.

In it Katy walked up and down in the May twilight. She moved slowly as though she were very idle or very tired, or as though no duties waited her. Her face was white; in the black dress which she had had made for her grandfather's funeral and which her grandmother had persuaded her to lay away, she seemed taller and more slender than she was.

Each time she turned at the end of the garden walk, she looked at the house and then away quickly. She did not mean to look at all, but involuntarily she raised her eyes. The parlor windows behind which Grandmother Gaumer's lamp had shone so long were blank. In the room above, which had been Grandfather and Grandmother Gaumer's there was now a light. Every few seconds the light was darkened by the shadow cast by the passing to and fro of a large figure. From the same room came the sound of a child's voice, the little voice of "Ehre sei Gott" in the Christmas entertainment long ago. Now it was raised in cheerful laughter. In the kitchen, Edwin Gaumer sat by the table, a page of accounts before him. There were now more persons in the house than there had been since Katy had been taken there as a baby, but the house was, nevertheless, intolerably lonely. Grandmother Gaumer's life was ended; she had been laid beside her husband in the Millerstown cemetery. She had had a long life; she had outlived almost all those whom she had loved, even all her children but one; she needed no mourning.

But Katy sorrowed and would not be comforted.

"She was all I had. I have a few other friends like the squire and Sarah Ann, but these are old, too."

Katy walked more and more slowly along the garden path. Even her grandmother's death had brought from Alvin no letter.

"I cannot understand it," whispered Katy to herself; "I cannot understand it!"

It seemed to Katy that there was no subject in the world upon which her thoughts could rest comfortably, no refuge to which her weary, sorrowful soul could flee. During her grandmother's illness, she had dreamed of Alvin, of his progress at school, of the time when he should come home and they should plan together. He had kissed her again and again; she belonged to him forever. But why, oh, why did he not write? There was for poor Katy only anxiety and humiliation in the world.

"And I am in debt!" she mourned. Her constant reading of the Bible to her grandmother had furnished her with quotations for all the experiences of life. It was a textual knowledge which many preachers would have envied her. It gave her now a vehicle with which to express her woes. "I am like David in the cave," said she. "I am in distress and in debt."

"Fifty dollars!" whispered Katy as she walked up and down the garden paths. "I am fifty dollars in debt!"

It was true that the squire had insisted that the money must be a gift. But the squire had not the least suspicion of the purpose to which his gift had been devoted.

"They have nothing for Alvin," said Katy to herself. "Alvin has had no chance. He will surely pay it back to me. I am certain he will pay it back!"

The dew fell damp about her, but still Katy walked on and on, up and down the garden paths. When, finally, she went into the kitchen, her Uncle Edwin looked up at her blinking. In his rugged face was all the kindness and sober steadfastness of the Gaumers.

"Sit down once, Katy," said he, neither in command nor in request, but with gentle entreaty. "I want to talk to you a little."

Katy sat down on the edge of the old settle. She would listen to no condolences; every fiber in her body bristled at the first sign of sympathy. Sympathy made her cry, and she hated to cry. Katy hated to be anything but cheerful and happy and prosperous and in high hope.

Several minutes passed before Uncle Edwin began upon his subject. Though he loved Katy, he stood in awe of her, gentle and weak though she appeared in her black dress.

His first question was unfortunately worded.

"What are you going to do now, Katy, that gran'mom is gone?"

Katy looked at him sharply. She was not well; she was worried and unhappy; she found it easy to misunderstand.

"For my living, you mean?" said Katy, cruelly.

Uncle Edwin gazed, open-mouthed at his niece. He would have been ludicrous if he had not been so greatly distressed.

"Ach, Katy!" protested he, in bewilderment.

"What do you mean, then?"

Uncle Edwin had at that moment not the faintest idea of what he meant. He hesitated for an instant, then he stammered out an answer.

"I mean, Katy, when are you going to school?"

The room swam round before Katy's dull eyes. School! She was never going to school; she could not go to school. But a more acute anxiety threatened; the moment when she must give an account of her two hundred dollars was probably at hand. Katy's very heart stood still.

"I am not going to school," said she.

Again Uncle Edwin's mouth opened.

"Why, you are, Katy!"

"Do you mean" — wildly Katy seized upon any weapon of defense she could grasp: it was easy to confuse Uncle Edwin's mind — "do you mean when am I going away from here?"

Now Uncle Edwin's blue eyes filled with tears.

"Ach, Katy!" cried he. "We are only too glad to have you. You know how I wanted to take you when you were a little baby, and Aunt Sally wanted you. This is your home forever, Katy. But you always talked so of school and education!"

"I do not care for education."

Uncle Edwin's head shook with the activity of the mental processes within it.

"What!" he exclaimed, incredulously. Then he took a fresh start. Katy's ill-temper was incomprehensible, but when she heard what his plans were, she would be cross no longer.

"You have two hundred dollars in the bank, Katy. The two hundred that the governor sent you a while back, have n't you, Katy?"

He did not ask the question for information, but to establish the points of his simple discourse.

"Well," said Katy, faintly, from her agitation.

"That is a good start. Now the squire will help and I will help. We have this all arranged between us. Then, when you come of age you will get the money your gran'mom left you. But that you are not to touch for your education. That you will leave by me, because I am your guardian in the law. You were faithful to your gran'mom till the end, and you are not to spend your own money for education. The squire and I will look after that."

The muscles of Katy's face had stiffened and utterance was impossible. All the old, dear, eager hope filled her heart. But Alvin was still precious to her; her sacrifice had been made for him; the sacrifice whose extent she was just beginning to understand. This, however, was no time to think of Alvin. She forced herself to say again quietly that she was not going to school.

"Not—going—to—school!" cried Uncle Edwin with long pauses between his words.

"No," repeated Katy. "I am not going to school."

Then Katy sought her room and her bed.

When Uncle Edwin reported his interview with Katy to the squire, the squire laughed.

"Ach, she just talks that way! She is a little contrary, like all the women when they are tired or not so well. Of course she is going! She was in here not long ago talking about it and I gave her some money for books and other things."

The next day the squire himself spoke to Katy.

"Are you getting ready for school, Katy?"

"I am not going to school."

"Since when have you changed your mind?"

"This long time."

The squire turned and looked at Katy over his glasses.

"Why, it is only a little while since I gave you money for books!"

"You did n't give me money," corrected Katy, stammering. "It was a loan; I said it was a loan. Else I would n't have taken it."

"Humbug, Katy!"

If the squire had been Katy's guardian, she would have gone promptly to school. But Uncle Edwin held that office and he could not have brought himself to compel Katy to do anything. The squire argued and coaxed and cajoled and Katy looked at him with a white face and stubborn eyes.

"It was n't right to take the two hundred dollars from Daniel in the beginning if you did n't intend to use it for schooling, Katy. What *are* you going to do?"

"I am going to earn my living," answered Katy. Her debt to the squire was swelling to tremendous proportions; and there was also the much greater sum for which she could give no account. Katy was sick at heart. But she managed to end the interview lightly. "I'm going to earn money and save it, and be a rich, rich woman."

Once safely out of the squire's office, Katy walked up the mountain road. She must be alone, to think and plan what she must do. School? Her whole body and mind and soul longed for school. But she could never go to school. She must pay the squire his fifty dollars. Suppose he should ask her to show him the books and dresses she had bought! She must also replace the whole two hundred before they found her out. She could see the expression of amazement and disgust on the face of the squire at the mere suspicion of any close friendship between a Gaumer and a Koehler. People despised Alvin.

"But they have no right to," cried Katy. "I want to see Alvin. He will make it right, I am sure he will make it right. He is older than I!" Katy spoke as though this fact were only now known to her. "He has no right —" But Katy went no further: her love had been already sufficiently bruised and cheapened. "I have tied myself up in a knot! I have done it myself!"

Katy looked down upon the Hartman house. Rumor said that Mrs. Hartman was failing; the rare visitors to her kitchen found her on the settle in midday.

"It is nothing but dying in the world," mourned Katy. "We grow up like grass and are cut down."

But Katy had now no time to think of the Hartmans. She went on up the mountain road until she reached the Koehler house. The walls needed a coat of whitewash, the fences were brown, the garden was overgrown. It was a mean little place in its disorder.

"He never had a chance," protested Katy in answer to some inward accusation. Then Katy went drearily home.

By the first of June Alvin had still not written; by the end of June Katy was still looking for a letter. The term of the normal school had closed; it was time for him to be at home. Surely he could not mean to stay away forever!

Day after day Katy's relatives watched her solicitously, expecting her grief to soften, her old spirits to return; day by day Katy grew more silent, more depressed. Uncle Edwin now attacked her boldly.

"Do you forget how smart the governor thought you were, Katy?" Or, "It was bad enough for your gran'mom that you could n't go to school for two years, Katy, but this would be much worse for her."

In July Uncle Edwin took fresh courage and began to reproach her. If she was going to school, no time must be lost, they must make plans, she must have an outfit.

"David Hartman is at home," said he. "He will be very learned. He is smart. But he is not so smart as you, Katy. Do you forget how you were up to him in school and he is older than you?"

Katy swallowed her coffee with a mighty effort.

"And Alvin Koehler was here to-day," went on Uncle Edwin. "He wants that the directors should give him the Millerstown school, now that Carpenter is no longer here. We think he should have it while he comes from Millerstown. He has made a good deal of himself. You would be surprised to see him. But you are much smarter than he, Katy!"

Katy put up her left hand to steady her cup.

"If he gets the school, he is going to get married," went on Uncle Edwin placidly. "It is a girl from away. I am surprised that Alvin had so much sense as to study good and then settle down and get married. He said he had such an agency in the school for hats and neckties and such things. That was how he got along. There is, I believe, a good deal more in Alvin than we thought. But you, Katy — Why, *Katy!*"

Katy had risen from the table, her face deathly pale.

"I have burned myself with coffee," said she.

Simultaneously Uncle Edwin and Aunt Sally and little Adam pushed back their chairs.

"Ach, Katy, here; take water, Katy!"

"No," protested Katy, "it is not so bad as that. But I will go and lie down a little. My head hurts me, too. I am tired and it is very hot. I will go to my room."

Stammering, Katy got herself to the stairway. There, having closed the door behind her, she started up the steps on hands and knees. At the top she sat down for a moment to rest before she crept across the room to her bed. Again it was an advantage to be "Bibelfest," she had once more an adequate vehicle for the expression of her woes.

"I am like Job," wept poor Katy. "I am afflicted. I am a brother to jackals and a companion to ostriches."

Once when Katy opened her eyes, she saw opposite her window a single, pink, sunset-tinted cloud floating high in the sky. Somehow the sight made her agony more bitter.

Down in the kitchen Uncle Edwin, alarmed, confused, distressed, found himself confronted by an irate spouse. He could not remember another occasion in all their married life when his Sally had lost patience with him.

"Now, pop," said she, "it is enough. You are to leave poor Katy be."

CHAPTER XIV

KATY PLANS HER LIFE ONCE MORE

For a long time Katy lay motionless upon her bed. The shock of Uncle Edwin's announcement was overwhelming; it robbed her of power to move or think. When an hour later Aunt Sally tiptoed into the room, she found her still upon her bed, her face buried in the pillow, relaxed in what seemed to be a heavy sleep. Aunt Sally gathered her clothes from the untidy heap into which they had been tossed, and laid them on the back of a chair and drew down the shade so that the sun should not shine directly into the sleeper's eyes; then she closed the door softly and went down the steps.

Katy did not stir until the sun had vanished behind the western hills and the stars were shining. Then she rose and bathed her face and sat down by the window.

"I must think," said Katy. "I must now plan out my life in a new way."

Stubbornly she forced herself to face the event which made necessary this fresh planning of her life. Beyond the event itself she did not at this moment proceed. She beheld Alvin with his red tie, Alvin with his dark curls, Alvin with his beautiful olive skin, Alvin with his great, expressive eyes. Sitting by her window with the soft evening air blowing in her face, the odors of the garden rising sweetly about her, Adam's gentle, laughing voice, and all the other pleasant sounds of the Millerstown evening in her ears, Katy wept.

"Oh, Elend (Misery)!" cried she, after the manner of Millerstown in trouble.

After a while the voice of pride made itself heard. It was not Alvin whom she defended, but herself.

"No word of marrying was said between us."

"But he kissed you," reminded the inward voice. "You thought he would marry you."

To this Katy could return only the answer of flaming cheeks and a throbbing heart.

"And there is all the money you gave him!" reminded the voice within her.

"I said he need n't pay it back!"

"But you expected him to pay it back!"

"But he need n't!"

"An honorable person would pay it before he got married."

"He has no money! He has nothing to pay it with!"

"He had an agency for neckties! He has enough to get married!"

It seemed to Katy that a ring of queer faces mocked her. She had eaten only a mouthful of supper, and she was a little light-headed. She seemed to see clearly the "lady from away" of whom her uncle had spoken. Imagination, helped by recollection of the beautiful ladies in the Allentown stores, pictured her clearly. She was brilliant and beautiful and learned, and she dressed marvelously. She was probably an acquaintance whom Alvin had made at school; she was all that Katy longed to be.

Now there rushed upon Katy a new and terrible sensation. She had been envious of David Hartman because he was going away to school, but here was a new kind of envy which affected not only the mind but the whole being. She threw herself down on her bed once more and hid her face in the pillow and wept with deep, sobbing gasps.

Presently, the paroxysm of crying over, Katy rose once more and once more dashed cold water over her burning cheeks.

"I will not cry another tear," said she with stern determination. "I will now plan my life. I must first earn the fifty dollars to pay back the squire; that is certain. Beyond that is nothing — nothing — nothing in this world. My young life is ruined."

For an hour Katy sat by the window, her chin in her hands. Frequently tears dropped to the window sill, but she gave way to sobs no more.

"My heart is broken," declared Katy. "But I must live on. I will probably live to be a thousand years old. I wish I was with my good gran'mom in heaven. I wish" — said Katy presently, with a long sigh — "I wish I had been born into this world with sense."

By the time that the house had quieted for the night and the sounds of Millerstown's going about had ceased, Katy, too, was asleep. She stirred uneasily on her pillow, her hands now clasped under a scarlet cheek, now flung above her head. But she had outlined her working theory.

In the morning she appeared in good time for her breakfast. She had not been refreshed by her restless sleep, but the first sharpness of the blow was past. In the doorway of the kitchen stood Bevy, her bright eyes sparkling with curiosity.

"What is this I hear about Koehler's boy?" she asked Edwin Gaumer. "Is it so that he will have the Millerstown school?"

"It looks that way," answered Uncle Edwin. "He is a normal, and he has good letters from the normal about his work, and he comes from Millerstown and we should help our own; and besides nobody else wants the Millerstown school."

"A Koehler teaching!" Bevy raised her hands in an astonished gesture. "He is the first Koehler that ever knew more than A B C. The school board will get into trouble. This will never go. Where will he live?"

"He will rent a house. He is getting married after school takes in."

"Married!" shrieked Bevy. The suspicion that friendly relations existed between Katy and Alvin had grown to certainty. Now, furious as Bevy had been because Katy had so lowered herself, she resented Alvin's daring to attach himself to any one else. "What cake-not-turned will have him?"

"A lady from away. I think she comes from Allentown."

"You have right to say from away," sniffed Bevy. "No girl from here would look twice at him."

Katy turned her back upon Bevy as she lifted the breakfast from the stove to the table. Sharp stabs of pain pierced her. She would have to hear a dozen times that day that Alvin was to be married. The strain of listening to Bevy's comments was almost more than she could endure. It had been important before that no one should suspect that she was helping Alvin; now it had become absolutely imperative.

When breakfast was over, Katy started down the street to carry out her plan of life. Her dress was longer than was becoming, the spring had gone out of her step. She passed the store and the post-office and turned up Church Street, and there beheld approaching the object of her journey, who started visibly at sight of her. David had grown still taller; he wore still more elegant clothes; he would have found an even more cordial welcome to the societies of his college than would have been extended to him upon entering. He was certain that he could be graduated in June of the next year, and he was pleasantly aware of his position as the most wealthy and the most reserved student in college. David liked the distinction. His speech was now entirely English; he was certain that it would be impossible for him to blunder again. He had determined that when he had graduated he would travel; he would never live for many months at a time in dull Millerstown. David added another adjective to Katy's characterization of that busy, tidy village; he called it *bourgeois*. David had, indeed, soared high above the low plane of his origin! He had found among the few books in the Hartman house the pictures of Paris and Amiens and Canterbury, and had learned for the first time that his father had been abroad. The mystery of his father was thereby deepened. There was only one portion of David's heart which had not hardened; in that his father was enthroned. His father, he was convinced, had had great powers, but he was held to earth and to Millerstown by a cruel fate which had linked him forever to an unworthy companion. Thus had Cassie's son decided against her.

David was astonished to hear Katy call to him.

"Come here, please, David. I want to talk to you."

He crossed the street at once and stood looking down at her. He could not help seeing, even though he had relegated Katy forever to obscurity in Millerstown, that Katy had not become altogether unattractive. Her eyes no longer sought his brightly, she looked down or past him as he came toward her. He wondered what possible errand she could have with him. He felt his face flushing and he was furious with himself.

"How are you, Katy?" said he, his voice sounding strangely in his ears.

Katy did not hear his question. Her thoughts were fixed upon the plan of life.

"I want to speak to you about something, David. I was going to your house. The doctor said your mother was not well. I heard him say to the squire that she would have to have a girl to live with her when you went back to school. I would like the place, David."

David's eyes nearly popped from his head. It was true that his mother seemed feeble and that he had been making inquiries about a maid for her. But by such an offer as this he was dumbfounded. Had Katy lost her mind? No Gaumer had ever worked out. Her relatives were comfortably fixed; she would doubtless have some money of her own when she came of age. Where was Alvin Koehler, the despicable, to whom Katy had seemed attached? Had he heard her aright? He could only look at her and gasp out a foolish, "*You!*"

"I can work," said Katy, with a scarlet face. "I did all the work when my grandmother was sick for so long."

"Are you not going to school?" David grew more and more astonished as he became convinced that Katy was in earnest.

"I am not going to school," said Katy. "If I cannot get a place to work at your house, I will get a place somewhere else, that is all."

"Are you in any trouble, Katy?" asked David. "Can I do anything for you?"

Katy's head lifted. David Hartman was pitying her, asking to be allowed to help her. It was intolerable. She realized now how tall he was, how deep his gray eyes, how fair his white skin; she remembered her gingham apron, her debt, her disappointed hopes, every embarrassment and pain that had befallen her.

"There is nothing wrong, of course," said she coldly as she turned away. "That is all I wanted of you."

"Oh, but wait!" David went to her side and kept pace with her. He did not proceed with his speech at once. The old vision dazzled him, Katy in a scarlet dress, Katy laughing, Katy racing down the pike. It was abominable for her to become a servant — upon this subject, also, David's opinions had advanced. What in the world were her relatives about? But if she must live out, it would be better for her to work for his mother than to work at the hotel — the only other establishment in Millerstown which required the services of a maid. He would then have her in his house; the notion set David's cheeks suddenly to burning, his heart to throbbing. He wondered what room his mother would give her, where she would sit at the table, what she would do in the evenings when her time was her own.

"Do you want to engage me?" asked Katy, sharply; "or don't you want to engage me?"

"My mother will be only too glad to have you," said David, eagerly.

"I will come when your school opens," promised Katy, as she turned the corner.

"If I get a dollar and a half a week," — the standard of wages in Millerstown was not high, — "it will take me thirty-three and a third weeks to save fifty dollars," reckoned Katy. "That will take from September till June. After that I do not think of anything. Perhaps by that time I will die. Then I do not care if they find out that I have n't my two hundred dollars any more."

Katy at home went on with her accustomed tasks. She was silent; she avoided her aunt and uncle, since any sudden, gentle address made her certain that she was going to cry. She put little Adam down whenever he wished to climb up beside her on the settle; she was to every one a trying puzzle. In her nervousness she had often a desire to stand still and scream.

One evening the squire came into the Gaumer kitchen. Edwin lay on the settle asleep, his wife sat by the table sewing, little Adam was long since in bed. Katy, too, had gone upstairs. Forgetting now that she had announced her intention of going to bed immediately, she left her place by the window to go down for a drink, and came face to face with the squire who was entering. The squire looked grave; he seated himself in Grandfather Gaumer's armchair as though he meant to hold court. In a flash Katy knew what he had come to say. Uncle Edwin sat up blinking, Aunt Sally dropped her sewing into her lap. The squire did not often pay calls so late in the evening.

"Katy," began the squire in a stern voice, "what is this I hear about you?"

Katy's hand was still upon the latch of the stairway door; she grasped it for support. She had thought that she was prepared for the coming interview, but she was now badly frightened. Never before had the squire spoken to her with anything but gentleness and affection.

"What do you hear about me?"

"Benner came in just now on his way from Cassie Hartman's. He had been trying to find a girl for her. She said that now she would not need one, that you were going to hire out to her in September."

Uncle Edwin blinked more rapidly. Aunt Sally's lips parted.

"Well?" said Katy.

"Is this thing so?"

"Yes," answered Katy, bravely. "There is nothing wrong in it. It is honest."

"You are going to hire out!" cried Edwin.

Aunt Sally began to cry. These tears were not the first she had shed on Katy's account.

"What *for?*" demanded Uncle Edwin. "You have a home. I told you we would send you to school. You need not even touch your money. What is this, Katy?"

"I want to earn my living, that is all." Katy's voice was dry and hard. "It is surely my right to earn my living if I want to!"

"Earn your living if you must!" said the squire, gruffly. "Of course you can earn your living if you want to. But go to school and learn to earn it right."

"I do not want to go to school."

The squire looked at her helplessly. Then he crossed the room and took her by the shoulders and seated her on the settle between Edwin and himself. He was a persuasive person; it was hard for any one to deny him what he commanded or what he requested.

"Katy, dear, are you in any trouble?"

Katy actually prayed for help in her prevarication.

"No."

"There is Edwin and here am I," went on the squire. "We are strong enough to do up anybody. Now, what is the matter, Katy?"

"Nothing," insisted Katy.

"You once wanted to sing," Aunt Sally reminded her. "You were wonderful strong for singing."

"Sing!" echoed Katy. "I, sing? I can only caw like a crow."

"You had such plans," said Uncle Edwin. "You were going to be so educated. You were going to bring home your sheaves!"

"I have more sense now," explained Katy.

She looked at them brightly. Her eyes measured their broad shoulders — how she longed to lay her heavy burden upon them! She no longer belonged to her kin, she was an alien; she had allied herself with Koehlers, with William Koehler who was a thief, with Alvin Koehler who scorned her. She would sooner die than tell what she had done. The Gaumers were not niggardly, but they knew the value of money. Even Katy had learned that it took thirty-three and one third weeks to earn fifty dollars!

"You must let me be!" she burst out wildly. "I am not a child. I have no father and mother and my dear grandfather and grandmother are dead. You must let me be! You are persecuting me!"

In an instant the stairway door closed in the faces of her astonished elders. Uncle Edwin got out his handkerchief and wiped his eyes.

"Millerstown will think we are ugly to her," he said.

"I do not care what Millerstown thinks," declared the squire as he rose to go. "It is what *I* think. In the name of sense what has come over the girl?"

In her room Katy threw herself once more upon that oft-used refuge, her bed.

"If I could forget him," she moaned. "If I only could forget him. It is not right to think of him. I cannot be learned, but I can be good. It is wrong to think all the time of him." She remembered various women in the village who loved inconstant, unfaithful men. "I am a Mary Wolle! I am Sally Hersh! I am a shame to myself!"

Three times before September the squire reasoned with her. Even the doctor ventured to remonstrate.

"No Gaumer has ever done such a thing before, Katy."

"Well, you," said Katy with spirit, "are not a Gaumer, so you do not need to care."

At her Bevy stormed.

"You surely have one rafter too few or too many, Katy. There is something wrong with your little house! *Are* you crazy, Katy?"

"Yes," answered Katy, thus nearly paralyzing Bevy Schnepp. "I am."

In September Katy took up her abode at the Hartmans'. Millerstown saw her go with wonder. She carried a little satchel and walked with her chin in the air. Millerstown gazed out doors and windows to see whether the thing it had heard could be true.

"Ach, Katy!" protested Sarah Ann, "are you not going to be high gelernt?" Sarah Ann suspected some difficulty at home; her sympathetic soul was distressed for Katy. "You can come any time and live with me."

"Won't you ever go to your uncle any more?" asked Susannah Kuhns, her frank inquiry voicing the curiosity of Millerstown.

Katy turned and faced them.

"Why, certainly I will. I will go there every day."

Alvin Koehler had opened the Millerstown school and had already rented a house from William Knerr the elder. Katy saw him almost daily; he had even stopped her on the street to tell her that he had not forgotten her. He exuded satisfaction with himself from every pore; he would even have told her about his Bessie if Katy had lingered for an instant.

"She is not so good-looking as she once was, Katy is n't," said Alvin as he looked after her.

David Hartman had gone when she reached his mother's house. Mrs. Hartman lay upon the settle in the kitchen. Her face was pale; she sat up with difficulty when Katy came in. She knew little of the affairs of Millerstown; she did not speculate about the reasons for Katy's presence in her house.

"It is a long time since my house was cleaned right," she complained. "We must begin at the top and clean everything. To-day, though, we will clean David's room. That is where you are to sleep. You can first scrub the cupboards and dust the books and put them away in the cupboard. He has many, many books and they gather dust so. Then stuff a dust-cloth tight under the door while you clean the rest. And take the bed apart so you can dust it well."

Mrs. Hartman lay down, breathless. The Gaumers had the reputation of being fine housekeepers; she hoped that her house would again be restored to cleanliness. Her son, with his untidy, mannish ways, was gone; peace had returned.

By Saturday Katy had become acquainted with the attic of the great house, the house which in her childhood had been to her the abode of Mystery. The attic, with its store of discarded but good furniture, its moth-guarded chests, was clean; it had been swept, whitewashed, aired, scrubbed, made immaculate. Each garment had been carried down to the yard, had there been beaten and sunned, and then had been restored to its proper place. Cassie, making her painful way to the third story, pronounced the work good. The next week the bedrooms were to be similarly treated. Into their magnificence Katy had peered, round-eyed. Here was no mystery, here was only grandeur. Thus Katy would have furnished her house.

On Saturday evening when work was done, Katy went down to sit with Aunt Sally. She was desperately tired; such toil as Cassie Hartman directed had not come within the Gaumer experience. But Katy was happier; that was plain even to the eyes of Aunt Sally, who shook her head over the strange puzzle. Katy had had no time for thinking. And into the putlock hole she had dropped a dollar and a half. The putlock hole was a safe bank; only a small hand like her own could reach into the inner depths into which she thrust her precious earnings.

CHAPTER XV

AN OLD WAY OUT OF A NEW TROUBLE

ON the morning of the 1st of September, Alvin dressed himself handsomely and went out the pike to the schoolhouse. The school board had, at his request, advanced his first month's salary, and with a part of it, though he was not to be married until January, he had paid the rent of the little house on Main Street, and with the rest he had bought a present for Bessie. It must be confessed that no generous spirit dictated Alvin's giving of gifts. It was a proper thing to give girls presents, thereby one made an impression upon them and upon their friends. But it also deprived the giver of luxuries. Alvin had begun to anticipate eagerly the time when he would no longer need to make presents to Bessie.

Bessie was a saleswoman in a store in a county seat; she received good wages and lived at home.

"What I earn is mine," she explained. "My pop buys even some of my clothes for me. I need only buy my fancy clothes. I have a nice account in the bank."

Bessie was a thrifty soul; she had made Alvin persuade his landlord, Billy Knerr, the elder, to take two dollars a month less than he had asked at first for the little house. She had planned already the style of furniture she wished for each room.

"It is to be oak in the dining-room," Alvin explained to Sarah Ann Mohr, with whom he took his meals. Alvin had reached that point in his self-satisfaction when he would have bragged to stones and trees if there had been no human creature at hand to listen. In Sarah Ann he had an eager hearer. Sarah Ann sat at close attention with parted lips and shining eyes. Sometimes she cried out, "Du liefer Friede" (Thou dear peace)! or, "Bei meiner Seele" (By my soul)!

"There is to be a sideboard and a serving-table to match," went on Alvin.

Sarah Ann opened her mouth a little wider.

"What is a serving-table, Alvin?"

"A serving-table is a — it is — a — a table," explained Alvin. "You serve on it."

"Oh, of course," said Sarah Ann, without understanding in the least. "I am astonished, Alvin!"

"We are just going to furnish two bedrooms now. When we have a servant, then it will be time enough to furnish the other room."

Sarah Ann's eyelids fluttered up and down.

"A servant! Ach, Alvin, I hope you are not going to marry a sick one!"

"Of course not," protested Alvin. "Of course not, Sarah Ann!" Alvin's chest expanded, he breathed deeply. "Ladies in the city do not do their own work, Sarah Ann!"

"Ladies!" repeated Sarah Ann. Here was the capstone of Alvin's grandeur. A lady was to Millerstown almost a mythical creature. "Are you, then, marrying a lady, Alvin?"

"To be sure," answered Alvin. "She never yet had to work in a kitchen. She is in the store just because she likes it. Her pop is rich."

"Do you mean she cannot cook, Alvin? Or wash? Or bake?"

"She could," said Alvin. "She could if she wanted to. But she does n't like it."

"Does n't like it!" As well might one say that Bessie did not like to sleep or eat or breathe! Sarah Ann's own breath was quite taken away. She shook her head ponderously, certain that either she or Alvin was going crazy. Then a question occurred to Sarah Ann. She had really a delicate sense of propriety; if she had stopped to think, she would not have asked the question. But it was out before she could restrain herself. "You will then bring your pop home from the poorhouse, I suppose, Alvin?"

Alvin blushed. He did not like to have any one mention his father.

"Father is not in the poorhouse because he is poor. He is there because he has lost his mind."

"Ach, Alvin, he is better, *indeed*, he is better! I was at the poorhouse to help with a prayer meeting, and, indeed, he is almost himself, Alvin."

Alvin rose from his seat on Sarah Ann's bench. The conversation had taken a turn he did not like.

"I could not have pop with Bessie," he insisted. "Pop could easily become violent."

When he had left her, Sarah Ann sat paralyzed. Her whole soul longed for the listening ear of Susannah Kuhns, but as yet her body had not gathered strength enough to transport itself to Susannah's house. Mercifully, the fates arranged that Susannah should observe the departing Alvin and should hurry over as fast as her feet could carry her. Susannah liked to hear Sarah Ann tell of the strange events of which she read, of the man whose head was turning into the head of a lion, of the dog who had learned to talk, of the woman who put glass into her husband's pies. But Susannah loved better to hear Sarah Ann tell of Alvin.

Now Susannah stood with arms akimbo, with shakes of head, with astonished clapping of lips together.

"This makes the understanding stand still," declared Susannah as she listened.

"He gave her a ring already," went on Sarah Ann. "He has a wedding present ready for her. He let himself be enlarged from a photograph and he has a big picture. He carries a cane in the picture. He has it hung up already in his house. He said I should come over once and he would show it to me."

In Alvin's course at the normal school he had studied not only pedagogy and psychology, but he had had practical experience in teaching. Connected with the normal school was a model school. There, in a light and airy room whose windows were filled with blooming plants and whose walls were decked with pictures, Alvin had given the "May lesson," a half-hour of instruction in the blossoms and birds of spring. Vases of snowballs and iris and dishes of bluets and violets served as illustrations for his remarks; he had also pictures of flickers and robins. His class was orderly and polite. For a month he had prepared for this half-hour of teaching; he had even reviewed with the superintendent of the model school what he meant to say and had received her advice and approval. Alvin thought so much about himself and so little about any other subject that he had by this time forgotten the ways of the Millerstown school. The Millerstown school and the model school were not much alike.

He received after his lesson was over a commendatory letter from the superintendent, the same letter which he had proudly exhibited to Edwin Gaumer and the other directors. The superintendent said that he was a young man of good presence, that he had thoroughly mastered his subject, that he had held the interest of his pupils throughout his teaching period, and had maintained perfect discipline. The superintendent did not say that she herself was a stern person, whom no child would disobey, and that she had remained in the room while the lesson was in progress. The model school superintendent could, to be sure, have conducted the lesson no differently. It would hardly have been wise to train the model school children to test the disciplinary powers of their teachers by insubordination, in order that the teachers might be trained in the various methods for quelling riots!

On the 1st day of September, Alvin put on his best suit and went to school. He had been carefully instructed in the importance of first impressions, the necessity for brightness and cheerfulness of hue as well as of disposition in the schoolroom. He had quite forgotten that the Millerstown teachers were expected to dust and sweep the room in which they taught.

He looked for his scholars along the road, but could see none of them. He had forgotten also the custom which awarded the best seat, which was always the rear seat, to the first comer. In his own day he had frequently arrived at the schoolhouse at seven o'clock of the opening day to discover that there were half a dozen boys ahead of him.

The children, trained finally by Mr. Carpenter into some respect for the office of teacher, answered politely the good-morning with which Alvin had been instructed to begin the school day. They sang with gusto the familiar, —

"O the joys of childhood,
Roaming through the wild wood,
Running o'er the meadows,
Happy and free," —

a favorite for several generations, since it gave full opportunity for the use of the human voice. Then the children set themselves with gratifying diligence to a study of the lessons which Alvin assigned them.

Alvin had notebooks in which were Outlines of Work for Primary Schools, Outlines of Work for Secondary Schools, Outlines of Work for Ungraded Schools, and the like. Here also were plans for Nature Work and Number Work, and various other kinds of Works whose names at least were new in the curriculum of the Millerstown school. The children took kindly enough to them all; they went quietly about their tasks. The discipline of school was pleasant. The older girls smiled at Alvin and blushed when he spoke.

To Sarah Ann, Alvin imparted daily fresh plans made by him and his Bessie for the furnishing of their house.

"We have changed to mahogany for the dining-room. Oak is not fashionable any more. People are getting rid of their oak." In these statements Alvin quoted from the clerk in a furniture store who had showed to him and Bessie a new mahogany set of dining-room furniture. "We have picked out our things already."

Sarah Ann did not know much about the various kinds of wood, but mahogany was a longer word than oak, and the furniture made of that wood was probably the finest that could be had. As a matter of fact, Sarah Ann had in her house without knowing it several fine pieces of mahogany. Sarah Ann told Susannah about Alvin's plans and they spread promptly over Millerstown.

"It is a rich girl, for sure," said Millerstown.

Once the young lady herself appeared to inspect Alvin's house. Millerstown saw the two step from the car and appraised the furs and the feathered hat as well as they could, considering that furs and feathers were not in general use in Millerstown except upon the backs of the creatures who wore them naturally. Millerstown was astonished and Millerstown admired. Katy Gaumer, returning from an hour spent with her Aunt Sally, her feathers a scarlet nubia, her furs a crimson shawl, blushed first scarlet and then crimson as she came upon Alvin and his lady, and went on her way choking back something in her throat. Alvin took his Bessie directly to Sarah Ann's house, and Sarah Ann, embarrassed and silent, accompanied them upon their tour of inspection. Sarah Ann could not explain exactly why she was invited.

"It is something about the fashion," she explained to Susannah. "The young folks are nowadays not to be alone."

Susannah laughed a scornful laugh.

"These must be fine young folks nowadays, if they cannot be trusted fifteen minutes to walk alone through a cold house!"

Upon the strength of Alvin's good position, and of Sarah Ann's account of the riches of the young lady's father, and of a dazzling glimpse of the young lady herself, Billy Knerr trusted Alvin for the second and the third and the fourth month's rent of his house, the school board continued to pay

Alvin in advance, and the coal dealer let him have three tons of coal on credit. An Allentown tailor made him a new winter suit on the same terms, and Sarah Ann let him stay on without reminding him of his board bill. Alvin hated to pay for commodities which could be eaten, like potatoes, or which could be burned up, like coal. When the coal was in the cellar, he forgot entirely that presently there would be a bill. Alvin was wholly happy; there were moments when the contemplation of his good fortune made him dizzy.

On Sunday evenings Alvin continued his attendance at the Millerstown churches. He meant to ally himself finally with one of them, the Lutheran, probably, since the Weygandts and Gaumers and Fackenthals were Lutheran. He still visited, however, the church of the Improved New Mennonites where Essie Hill blushed deeply under her plain hat as he approached. There was a new legend upon Essie's hat. Instead of being a worker in the vineyard, she was now a soldier in the kingdom. David Hartman still sat occasionally with her upon her doorstep. Again her father spoke to her about him.

"You can't marry anybody outside the church, Essie."

"No, pop."

Into the Reverend Mr. Hill's somber eyes there came for an instant a hopeful gleam.

"Perhaps we could get him in the church?"

"Perhaps," agreed Essie. "I talk to him sometimes."

It was in December when Fate turned against Alvin. Alvin had now burned his supply of coal and was angrily refused more. Alvin's Allentown tailor, failing to receive replies to his letter, sent a collector to interview Alvin, an insistent person who, failing to find him at home, visited him at the schoolhouse. Even Sarah Ann, who was patience personified, reminded her boarder gently that she had fed him for four months without any return.

"I did it to earn a little extra missionary money, Alvin," explained Sarah Ann. "We have at this time of the year always a Thank Offering. I thought I would earn this to put in my box."

In December, the spirit of evil entered the Millerstown school. The familiar sound of twanging wires, of slamming desk lids, the soft slap of moistened paper balls striking the blackboards, were the first warnings of the rise of rebellion. The Millerstown children had not enough to do. Their teacher had reached the end of his outlines and knew not how to make more. He was desperately tired of teaching; he could not understand how he could ever have supposed that Mr. Carpenter had an easy or a pleasant time.

One morning when he entered the schoolroom, he found the blackboard decorated with a caricature of himself, labeled with the insulting appellation which Susannah Kuhns had once bestowed upon him, "Der Fratzhans." There were only two pupils who were skillful enough to have drawn so lifelike a representation of their teacher; they were two of the four large girls in the upper class, of whose admiration Alvin had been certain. It was a cruel blow for poor Alvin.

Again the collector who represented the tailor visited him. This time he met Alvin on Main Street, in front of the post-office, and at the top of his loud and unfeeling voice, demanded instant payment.

"I will get it," promised Alvin. "Till Monday I will have it for sure."

It must be said in justice to Alvin that he did not think at once of making application to Katy Gaumer for succor in his financial situation. To his Bessie he offered no such slight as that. But succor Alvin must have. He knew so little about the law that he feared he might be cast into prison. When he had got rid of the insulting creature and his demands, he dressed himself in the suit under discussion and at once sought Bessie at her father's house in the county seat.

There, alas! Alvin did not behave in a manner befitting one whose education and manners were so fine. He asked Bessie plainly and frankly for a loan, having been led by Miss Katy Gaumer to expect an immediate and favorable response from any female whom he honored with such a request. To his astonishment Bessie stared at him rudely.

"Why do you want money?"

"To pay a few things."

"Don't you have any money?"

"It is n't time yet for my salary." In reality Alvin had been paid as at first, in advance.

"Don't you have any money in the bank?"

"Why, no!" It had never occurred to Alvin to do anything with money but spend it.

"Have you paid for the furniture?"

"The furniture?" repeated Alvin weakly.

"Yes, the furniture." Bessie was growing redder and redder, her voice sharper. "The furniture that you and I picked out this long while!"

"Why, no," confessed Alvin, "I thought that you — that you would — would —"

"You thought *I* would pay for it!" Bessie's voice rose so high that her whole family might have heard if they had not considerately left the house to her and her beau. "Well, you were mistaken!" — Bessie was a slangy person, she said that Alvin was "stung." "And here" — Bessie ran upstairs and returned with a letter — "here is this. I thought, of course, this was a mistake. I paid no attention to it. Open it!"

Alvin grew pale. He recognized, before the envelope was in his hand, the business card on the corner. The bill for Bessie's ring had come to him many times. Now upon the bill Bessie laid the ring itself.

"There!" said she.

Alvin remembered suddenly how David Hartman had appeared on the mountain long ago and had hurled himself upon him. He had now much the same sensations.

"Do you mean that it is over?" he faltered in a dazed tone.

"Yes," answered Bessie in a very firm, decided tone; "I mean just that."

After Alvin had carried the ring back to the jeweler, a way suggested itself of paying the tailor. He returned his beautiful best winter suit, worn but a very few times, and received some credit on his bill. The balance, alas! remained, and the tailor seemed but slightly mollified by his humility. The coal bill remained also, but the coal had been burned and could not be restored to the dealer. The landlord had also been deprived of the rent for his house, the food had been eaten. What Alvin should do about the landlord and about Sarah Ann he did not know. Alvin had a sad Christmas.

January and February passed slowly. Alvin was still too proud to confess to Millerstown that Bessie had jilted him; he paid a little on his great rent bill as means of staving off the discovery a little longer. The children in school became entirely ungovernable, their invention more brilliant and demoniacal. The stovepipe fell with a crash to the floor, the flying soot blackening the faces of teacher and pupils alike. Alvin found his overshoes filled with powdered chalk and damp sponges; he met fresh pictures of himself when he opened the door. When he undertook in midwinter to raise a mustache there appeared promptly upon the upper lip of most of his pupils a dark and suggestive line. The children grew more impertinent, the bills more pressing. In despair Alvin climbed the hill and ransacked the little house where he had lived with his father. He thought bitterly of William, who had squandered his money on madness, and who had given his son so unpleasant a life.

He found nothing in the little house. As he shut the door behind him, he remembered how John Hartman had sat dead in his buggy before the gate as he and Katy came down the mountain road.

At once a warm glow flooded the soul of Alvin. How comforting had been the touch of Katy on that frightful day, how brave she had been! How kind Katy had been to him always, how freely she had granted all he asked! And now Katy was rich, she had doubtless inherited a good deal of money from her grandmother, and she was earning dear knows what liberal salary at the rich Hartmans'. She had come to take a sensible view of education; she had decided, Alvin was certain, that it counted for nothing. To Katy his heart warmed. He remembered her with tears.

At once Alvin hastened back to his little house, and there, sitting straightway down at his table, indited a letter. Composition was easy; he had long ago written a model.

"DEAR, DEAR KATY, — I am in great trouble. I need a little money. If you have any, Katy, say about $25, put it in the hole in the wall. Katy, say you will." Then Alvin added a postscript. "I am not going to marry, Katy. I have broken it all off."

But Alvin did not present his letter. Instead, he held it until he should have made trial of another expedient. Perhaps some fragment of Katy's earlier largess still remained in the putlock hole!

That evening Alvin attended service at the church of the Improved New Mennonites. He was so unhappy that he dared not be alone, and in the church of the Improved New Mennonites he would meet none of his creditors, all of whom belonged to the larger, longer established churches. Here, too, Essie smiled at him. Essie was a comfortable person; she was neither ambitious for learning nor scornful of those who had no money. The preacher exhorted his congregation to make a fresh start; this Alvin determined to do.

On the way home he made a détour through the open fields until he reached the back of the Gaumer garden. Through the garden he crept softly. The night was dark, the wind whistled mournfully through the doors of the Gaumer barn. Alvin slipped and fell when his foot sank into the burrow of a mole. But Alvin pressed on.

When he put his hand into the putlock hole and his fingers touched the hard stone, he could have sunk to the ground with disappointment. Again he thrust in his hand and could find nothing. A third time he tried, pushing his cuff back on his arm so as to insert his hand as far as possible. A fourth time he reached in vain. In the old days when Katy had laid there for him the fat bills, they had always been within easy reach. Finally, in the last gasp of hope, he took from his pocket a long lead pencil and felt about with its tip. The broad stone which formed the floor of the putlock hole sloped; there, in the little pit at the back, Alvin's pencil touched an object which he could move about.

After much prying he drew it forth, a round half-dollar, a part of the last wages which Katy had received from Mrs. Hartman.

He held it in his hand and tried desperately to reach its fellows. Surely the Fates would not mock him with a half-dollar when his needs were so great! To-morrow evening he would bring a bent wire and see what he could do with that.

With the blessed coin in his hand, Alvin turned his steps homeward.

CHAPTER XVI

BEVY PUTS A HEX ON ALVIN

After Katy had cleaned the Hartman attic, she cleaned one by one the Hartman bedrooms. Cupboards and closets were emptied of their contents; clothes, blankets, great, thick comforts were carried to the yard and there were beaten and aired and restored to their places. Carpets were taken up to be put through the same process and then were nailed down once more to the floor, with mighty stretching of arms and pulling of fingers. Floors were scrubbed, paint was wiped, windows were polished; even the outside of the house was washed, the walls being approached by a leaning down from the upper windows, long-handled brush well in hand, and a stretching up from the lower windows. Any well-trained Pennsylvania German housewife is amply able to superintend the putting in order of an operating-room in a hospital.

Mrs. Hartman superintended the cleaning, though she was able to take no part. She lay day after day on the old settle in the kitchen and was helped night after night to her bed. She did not like to be helped; if she could make the journey herself while Katy was for a moment busy elsewhere, or when Katy had run down to sit for a few minutes with her Aunt

Sally, she was well pleased. As the hoard in Katy's bank grew, Katy's heart became lighter, her tongue moved with some of its old gayety. But Cassie made no answer; she said nothing, indeed, from day's beginning to day's end, except to give Katy directions about her work. Dr. Benner came occasionally to see her, rather as one who watches the progress of an incurable disease than as one who hopes to stay its course. The Lutheran preacher visited her and was received with all appropriate ceremony. Then, according to the old German custom, all work ceased and the family waited upon its guest. In nothing outside her house was Cassie interested. It seemed that for Cassie the springs of life had at last run dry.

When her day's work was done, Katy went to her room and read half the night away. David had brought home the sets of standard works in beautiful bindings which he had bought from agents who visited the college; and now into the stories of Scott and Dickens and Thackeray, stored by Cassie's command in David's cupboard, Katy plunged as a diver plunges into a stream. The books had not been packed away in any order of author or subject; upon them Katy seized as they came to hand. When she could not understand what she read — and there were many poems and essays at which Katy blinked without comprehension — she cried, thinking with bitter regret and heartache that now she might have been in school.

"And I am a servant girl!" sighed Katy. "It is no shame to be a servant girl, but it is a black shame for me!"

Daily she made mental reckoning of the silver dollars and half-dollars accumulating in the putlock hole.

"But there are the two hundred dollars!" she cried. "What shall I say to them about the two hundred dollars! Perhaps when I have paid the squire his fifty dollars, I could tell him that the two hundred dollars was gone and he could get uncle to give me some of my money. Perhaps I can sing again!" The pictures of foreign places in a beautiful book of David's made her heart throb. "Once I thought I could see all such places!"

Then Katy hid her face in her hands and David's beautiful book slid from her lap to the floor.

At Christmas time David Hartman came home. He had attained his full height; his gray eyes looked clearly into the eyes of those who spoke to him. He stood at the head of his class; he had gained confidence in himself. He had asked his mother for a larger allowance and had received it promptly. It amused him to flaunt his money in the eyes of the college, to spend large sums as though they were nothing. He brought his mother handsome presents, and his mother had handsome presents for him. It seemed as though he and she finally understood each other. Of resting his head on any one's shoulder, David thought no more; into his throat came no choking sensations as of old. At Millerstown's pronunciations and Millerstown's customs David laughed. When it was necessary for Katy to be with him, she recounted to him the Millerstown news and David listened politely. Presently it seemed to Katy that he was laughing at her; then she said no more. It was not necessary for them to have much speech together; Katy went down to her Aunt Sally's to sleep while David was at home, leaving the Hartman house soon after supper. During the day she did not see him except in his mother's presence.

"I have read some of your books," she told him one afternoon when she sat at the window sewing and he sat on the opposite side of the kitchen with a book, and Cassie lay asleep on the settle between them.

"That is right," said David. "I hope you have enjoyed them."

"I did." Katy laid down her sewing. If she could talk about these books with David! "I read first of all Wanity —" oh, terrible slip of a tongue which knew better! "I mean Vanity Fair!"

A flash came into David's eyes, a flash of bitter reminiscence. To Katy it was a flash of amusement.

"Vanity Fair is a fine book," said David. But David's tongue betrayed him again. David, too, said "Wanity." To Katy the tone was mocking.

Katy said no more. Katy went to visit her Aunt Sally even in the afternoons.

"'I am brutish as the ox and the ass,'" quoted Katy.

When the preacher came to see David she could not slip away, though she tried hard. She had to listen to the two discussing David's work. She was even unfamiliar with the names of some of his studies.

David, to the awe and envy of his college mates, had for some time kept a riding-horse. He rode while he was at home on a young horse of the Weygandts' which Jimmie had trained to the saddle. Millerstown watched him with admiration as he galloped along the village streets in curious riding-clothes; the squire shook his head over him. The squire was Cassie's adviser; he knew the extent of the fortune which David was to inherit; he was well acquainted also with the curious mental inheritance which was David's. He could not get on with David, who was as taciturn as his parents.

David rode about to all his mother's farms and orchards and to the fine woodland on the mountain with its precious soil. Many persons were dependent upon the Hartman estate for their livelihood, more would be dependent when the mines could be opened again. There came into David's mind as he rode homeward a dim vision like the vision his father had seen of a happy community of which he should be the head. But David did not try to make his vision clear to himself. He was passing the poorhouse and his thoughts turned to the Koehler family. Alvin he hated; with Alvin he still owed the settlement of a debt, even though Katy Gaumer seemed to think of him no more. William Koehler himself had been punished; he was praying and gibbering somewhere behind the walls of the poorhouse. David thought of his father, and the rage of his youth against the Koehlers swelled his heart again almost to bursting. Without exception he hated Millerstown.

Nevertheless, David went once or twice to see the little Improved New Mennonite, a proceeding which amazed and disgusted Millerstown. Susannah Kuhns expressed to Katy Millerstown's opinion that that connection would "give a match"; then she recounted to Katy at great length the ambitious plans of Alvin and his bride.

When David returned to school, Katy went back to her room in the Hartman house. Christmas had been dreary with its memories and its contrasts with the past; Katy was not sorry to have again constant occupation for her mind and her hands. She straightened out the slight disorder caused by the presence of David; she got the meals as usual; she exchanged a few words with the invalid; and when the quiet of night had settled upon the house, she lit the lamp in her room and opened the beautiful illustrated book at the page upon which she had closed it. But Katy did not proceed with the account of the Coliseum. Katy closed the book, and drawing her scarlet shawl a little closer about her shoulders, laid her cheek down on the bureau. Katy was again obsessed. She saw David's clear gray eyes, looking at her in astonishment as she applied for a servant's place in his mother's house. She heard his speech, so unlike her own; he seemed to stand close beside her. She saw again that flicker of amusement in his eyes, heard again that unconscious mockery. David was a part of the great world into which she had expected to fare forth. David was English. David was as far above her as the stars.

"He was n't in the beginning!" cried Katy. "I have made myself what I am. I am mean and low and ignorant."

Then Katy rose from her chair and clasped her hands across her heart.

"Am I to have *this* again?" cried Katy. "Alvin is only just out of my mind. What am I to do? What *am* I to do? What am I made of? I am worse than Mary Wolle and Sally Hersh. If I cannot have one in my mind to worry me, then I must have another. Am I to have no peace in this world?"

Katy looked about the little room with its narrow bed, its little bureau, its single chair, its cupboard crowded with books. Katy remembered that this was David's room, that here he slept, had slept only last night. Katy knelt down by the bed and began to pray, not for David, but for herself.

By morning Katy had made a firm resolution.

"I will think only of this money. I have twenty-four dollars saved. In four months I will be free of my debt."

January, February, and March saw poor Cassie growing weaker and more silent, saw Katy's hoard swelling.

"It is thirty dollars!" said she. "Now it is thirty-six dollars!" "Now it is forty-two dollars!" Frequently Katy thanked God. A little lighter grew her heart.

One evening in March a sudden uneasiness overwhelmed her.

"I will go down and count it," said she. "Perhaps I should put it in a safer place. But no one knows that the hole is there but a few people, and no one could get a hand into the bottom but me."

It was not Saturday; Katy had no sum to add to the deposit; but she wrapped her shawl about her and went down to the Gaumer house. There, laughing at herself for her uneasiness, she rolled back her sleeve and thrust her arm deep into her hiding-place. Then she stood perfectly still and with a moan began to feel about. The little pit had no outlet; it was still safe and dry, a capital hiding-place, provided one kept its existence to one's self, but it was empty.

At first Katy could not believe the evidence of her senses. Frantically she thrust in her hand, reluctantly she drew it out and felt of it with the other hand and even laid it along her cheek. It was not until she had repeated this process several times that she was able to appreciate the truth. The put-lock hole was empty, her hard-earned hoard was gone, freedom from debt cruelly postponed.

Then Katy, who had so bravely hidden her various troubles from Millerstown and from her kin, began to cry like a crazy person. She struck at the hard stone wall until her hands bled; she ran, crying and sobbing, to her Uncle Edwin's door, and burst it open, frightening him and Aunt Sally nearly out of their wits as they sat by the kitchen table.

"My money is gone!" she cried, seizing Uncle Edwin by the arm. "I tell you my money is gone! It is stolen! It is not there! Somebody has run away with it!"

"Your money!" gasped Uncle Edwin, struggling to his feet. "What money? Where had you money, Katy? Who stole it? In Heaven's name, Katy, what is wrong?"

Katy sank down on the old settle and stared at them wildly.

"I had money in the hole in the wall."

"What hole in the wall, Katy?"

"Right here in this wall, where Bevy put cakes for me when I was little and lived with my gran'pop. I had all my money that I ever earned there — it was forty-two dollars. Cassie would tell you that she gave me forty-two dollars already, or you could count it up by weeks. On Saturday evening it was there, and now it is gone. Oh, what shall I do, what shall I do?"

Katy began to wring her hands; Aunt Sally besought her, weeping, to lie down; Uncle Edwin reached to the high mantel-shelf where he had laid his gun out of little Adam's reach.

"There is no one there now!" cried Katy. "It is no use to go now! I can reach to the bottom of the hole and there is not a penny there." She began to repeat what she had said. "My money is gone! My money is gone!" William Koehler when he was accused of stealing the communion service had behaved no more crazily.

"I will go for the squire," said Uncle Edwin, moving toward the door, gun in hand. "That is the first thing to do."

Then Uncle Edwin paused. From without rose a fearful uproar. There were loud cries in a man's voice, there were shrill reproaches and commands in a woman's. There were even squeals. Aunt Sally added her screams to those which proceeded from without. Uncle Edwin advanced boldly, his empty gun lifted to his shoulder.

"It is Bevy!" cried Aunt Sally. "Some one has Bevy!"

Bravely Aunt Sally followed Uncle Edwin; weeping Katy followed Aunt Sally. At the corner of the house they paused in unspeakable amazement.

The squire had opened his door; from it a broad shaft of light shot out across the lawn which separated the two houses. It illuminated brightly the opening of the putlock hole and its vicinity. There an extraordinary tableau presented itself to the eyes of Katy Gaumer and her kin. The center of the stage was occupied by Bevy and a struggling man. Over his head Bevy had thrown her gingham apron; she twisted it now tightly like a tourniquet and screamed for help.

"Thief! Thief!" shouted Bevy.

"My ear! My ear!" cried a muffled voice from beneath the apron, a voice recognized immediately by one at least of the astonished spectators.

"I do not care for your ear," screamed Bevy. "Your ear is nothing to me. You were stealing! What is it that you have stolen?"

Wildly Alvin tried to free himself; frantically Bevy clung to him. Bevy now found an ally in Uncle Edwin, who seized the prisoner in a firm grasp.

"Whoa, there!" cried Uncle Edwin. "I have him, Bevy. I have him by the arm. You can let him go."

There was the sound of approaching footsteps, of opening doors, there were questions and outcries.

"What is it?"

"I heard some one yelling."

"Shall I bring a gun?"

"It was a pig that squealed!"

"What is wrong with everybody?"

The squire came flying across the lawn. He saw as he opened the door the struggling Alvin and the excited Bevy and Edwin Gaumer armed here on this peaceful night with a gun. He saw also his grandniece with her flaming cheeks, her swollen eyes, her disheveled hair. The squire did not know what had happened, but he closed his door behind him so that the scene should be no longer illuminated.

"Nothing is wrong," he declared sternly. "Nobody shall bring a gun."

With a gesture he ordered his kinsfolk and Bevy and her prey into his office; with an arm thrown across her shoulders he protected his niece from further observation. Then, cruelly, upon Millerstown he shut his office door. For a while Millerstown hung about; then having recognized no one but the squire, and neither able to see nor to hear further, departed for their several homes.

Inside the squire locked the door and motioned his excited guests to seats. If Katy had had her way she would have died on the spot, she would have sunk into the earth and would have been swallowed up. But with the squire's arm about her she could do nothing but proceed to his office with the rest.

The squire looked from one to the other, from Edwin with his gun to Aunt Sally with her round and staring eyes; from Bevy to Alvin, who smoothed his hair and laid a protecting hand over his suffering ear.

"What on earth is the matter with you people?" he demanded. "Has war broken out in Millerstown?"

At once began an indescribable clamor.

"I was going over to Sally a little —" this was Bevy. "I saw him." Bevy indicated her prisoner with a contemptuous gesture. "He was digging in the hole, and I —"

"You did n't!" contradicted Alvin. "You did n't!"

"What hole?" asked the squire.

"Do you dare to say I did n't take you by the ear?" cried Bevy with threatening fingers lifted toward that aching member.

"The hole where Katy had her money," explained Edwin.

"It was stolen," cried Aunt Sally.

"I did n't!" protested Alvin again, his face green with fright. He blamed his own greediness for the discovery. On Sunday evening he had taken all Katy's hoard; why had he been so mad as to return to seek more?

"A mule is a mule," proclaimed Bevy Schnepp. "A Koehler is a Koehler. They steal; you cannot better them by education; they are all the time the same, they —"

"Be still, Bevy!" commanded the squire.

But Bevy would not be still. She gave another scream and began to dance up and down in her grasshopper-like fashion.

"Look at him, once! He says he did n't, does he? Look once what he has in his hand!"

At once all eyes turned with closer scrutiny upon Alvin. He still held in his hand the implement with which he had coaxed Katy's dollars and half-dollars from the depths of the putlock hole. It was only a bit of twisted wire, but it had done its work well.

"Like father, like son!" screamed Bevy again. "What did I say? Where did he get the money to get educated? Where —"

"Bevy, be still!" commanded the squire in a sterner tone. "Katy, did you keep your money in the putlock hole?"

"Yes," answered Katy in a low voice. Here, face to face with Alvin, she remembered all the past, her long vigils on the porch when she watched for him, his kiss in the shadow, his later, different kisses, his ingratitude, her shame. Katy's head sank lower and lower on her breast.

"Why did you select such a place for a bank, Katy?"

"I used to keep things there when I was a little girl. Into the deep part nobody could put a hand but me. That is why I thought it was safe."

The squire looked more and more angry. His voice sank deeper and deeper in his throat.

"You did n't count on bent wire, did you? How much money did you have there, Katy?"

Katy answered so faintly that the squire could not hear.

"She said forty-two dollars," answered Uncle Edwin for her. Uncle Edwin had now stationed himself behind Alvin; at Alvin's slightest motion he put forth a hand to seize him. The Gaumers had not been able to defend their kinswoman from her own incomprehensible foolishness, but from such bold assault from without they were amply able to protect her.

"Is this so, Katy?" asked the squire.

Katy's head sank on her breast. "Yes, sir."

"Alvin, look at me!"

Alvin lifted his head slowly. He saw jail yawning before him. If they searched his house, they could still find a few of Katy's silver coins. Then under the pressure of fear — Alvin as yet felt no shame — his mind worked to some purpose. There was one possible defense to make; this he offered.

"Katy often gave me money and put it in that place for me," he said, boldly. "There I got it many times. Ain't —" Alvin's normal school training suddenly forsook him — "ain't it so, Katy?"

"You must be wandering in your mind, Alvin," said the squire, scornfully.

"There he will not wander far," cried Bevy with a shrill laugh.

Alvin rose from his chair and approached Katy. Color returned to his cheek, his eyes brightened.

"Ain't it so, Katy, that you often put money in that hole for me?"

"Humbug!" cried the squire.

But Alvin persisted. He went nearer to Katy, and with single united motion Katy's relatives sprang toward him. Aunt Sally put her arm round her niece, Bevy made a threatening motion toward Alvin's ear, Uncle Edwin seized him by the arm.

But Alvin grew ever bolder. Despite the threats of Bevy and the hand of Edwin, he took another step toward Katy.

"Say you gave money to me often, Katy?"

Katy answered in a low voice. She was too confused to think of any expedient; she answered with the truth. Perhaps that would put an end to this intolerable scene. It would be bad enough to have them know, but it was worse to stand here in misery with them all staring at her.

"Yes," she answered Alvin, "I did give you sometimes money."

"What!" cried the squire.

Uncle Edwin and Bevy each gave a kind of groan.

Katy lifted her head.

"I said 'yes.'"

Now Bevy began to cry aloud.

"Next time I will not take you to the squire, you lump! Next time I will twist your ear quite off. I will settle you right!"

"Bevy, you had better go," suggested the squire; and meekly Bevy departed.

"Edwin, suppose you and Sally leave these young people here."

Together Uncle Edwin and Aunt Sally approached the door. Aunt Sally was wiping her eyes on her apron; Uncle Edwin walked with bent head as though the name of Gaumer was disgraced forever. Them the squire followed to the door, and outside, wishing to be certain that no curious Millerstonians lingered. With his hand on the outer knob, he closed the door while he promised to see Edwin later in the evening. Edwin stopped to express his horror at this strange situation; their conversation consumed a few seconds at least.

Behind the closed door Alvin approached Katy as she stood by the squire's desk, numb, smitten, unable to raise her head.

"Katy," said he, softly, "I do not care if you have worked out, Katy. That is less than nothing to me. I am never going to marry that other one. She is no good. I will marry you, Katy. I did not know" — Alvin's voice shook — "I did not know till this time how I love you, Katy."

At this point Alvin laid his hand upon Katy's arm and applied a tender pressure.

Then, suddenly, furiously, Alvin was flung aside, back against the sharp point of the squire's desk. Young women do not keep house in the Pennsylvania German fashion, with sweeping and scrubbing and beating of carpets, without developing considerable muscular power. Terrified, bruised by contact with the sharp corner of the desk, Alvin lifted hands to defend himself from Katy, whose worth he had learned so suddenly to value.

Katy, however, stayed to punish him no further. Instead, she rushed across the room and threw herself into the arms of the squire. She spoke shrilly, she sobbed and cried.

"Send him away and let me talk to you alone! I must talk to you! Oh, please send him away!"

Alvin needed no orders. He read in the squire's expression permission to depart, and he slipped sidewise out the door, making himself as small as possible for the passage.

When the door had closed behind him, the squire put Katy into a corner of the sofa in his back office and sat down beside her.

"Now, Katy, begin."

With tears and hysterical laughter, Katy began her story.

"I thought I was so fine and powerful when I helped him. I thought I was rich with my two hundred dollars and that I could do anything. I thought he had no chance and I would help him. I pitied him because he had a bad name from his father. The worst thing was I liked him. Oh, dear! Oh, dear!"

The squire's frown grew blacker and blacker.

"He took the money and never paid any of it back, and then stole this from you yet! Money you were saving to pay me! Money you had borrowed for him! Oh, Katy, Katy!" Then, suddenly, the squire laughed. "Katy, dear, I bought a gold brick like this once. It was n't just like this, but it cost me much more. We've got to learn, all of us! Oh, you poor soul! And my gold brick was not bought for the sake of charity, Katy!" The squire laughed and laughed and Katy cried and cried as her head rested upon the broad shoulder which had been offered to her earlier. "Now, Katy, it is late and I will take you home."

The squire put Katy's scarlet shawl about her and took her by the arm, and together they went up the misty street. At the Hartmans' gate the squire left his companion. Then, with a quicker stride he sought the house of Alvin Koehler.

CHAPTER XVII

ALVIN DOES PENANCE AND IS SHRIVEN

THE squire stayed for fifteen minutes with Alvin Koehler; when he left, Alvin was limp; he sat in his little house and wept. Hitherto in his life Alvin had had grave difficulties; he had been unhappy in his poverty; he had been embarrassed by the queerness of his father; he had been disturbed when he feared that Katy Gaumer would not keep her promise and help him go to school; he had been terrified by the behavior of the Millerstown children and by the overshadowing cloud of his unpaid bills.

But now a new emotion filled his heart and weighed down his spirit. He was now, for the first time, bitterly ashamed. He had told the squire all his misery; his debt to the storekeeper, to the landlord, to Sarah Ann, to Katy, to the coal dealer, to the jeweler, to the tailor. He had a notion that in thus confessing he was doing penance. He had also a vain and foolish hope that the squire might offer to help him.

"I am turned inside out," he mourned when the squire had gone. "There is nothing to me any more."

It was on Friday that Alvin was caught, wire in hand, investigating the contents of Katy's putlock bank. That night he did not sleep. He sat by his table, pencil in hand, contemplating the problem which confronted him and trying to work out a sum in proportion. If he owed Katy two hundred and fifty dollars, and Sarah Ann Mohr twenty dollars, and the landlord fifty-eight dollars, and the coal dealer fifteen dollars, and the tailor thirty dollars, how much of his next month's salary should justly go to each — provided, of course, that he were not summarily dismissed from his position and thus deprived of his salary? Over the difficult problem he fell asleep toward morning.

He did not go to Sarah Ann's for breakfast, a fact which caused Sarah Ann no uneasiness, as he usually took advantage of the Saturday holiday to sleep late and thus make a good recovery from the exhaustion following his arduous association with the Millerstown children. Besides, another subject had this morning the whole of Sarah Ann's attention and the attention of Millerstown. Cassie Hartman had died suddenly in the night.

Nor did Alvin go to Sarah Ann's for dinner, but supported life with some crackers and apples which were in his house. It seemed to him that the passers-by looked curiously at his dwelling; he was certain that the story of his difficulties had spread over Millerstown. Who could ever have dreamed that Katy would treat him so shabbily?

Late in the afternoon there came a ponderous step along his board walk and a knock at the door.

Terrified, Alvin sat still until the rap was repeated, then he opened the door a tiny crack. Without stood a no more terrifying person than Sarah Ann.

At sight of Sarah Ann, however, Alvin trembled. Sarah Ann had again reminded him, gently but with firmness, that her Thank Offering was long overdue.

"I made it up out of the money I keep for regular collections, Alvin," Sarah Ann had explained. "I keep that money in a little can. But now that little can is empty. I have nothing for General Fund."

"I cannot pay you." Thus Alvin greeted her miserably through an inch-wide crack. "I will try to pay you sometime, Sarah Ann, but I cannot pay you now."

"I am not here for pay," protested Sarah Ann, weeping. "It is not a day for collecting money in Millerstown. Poor Cassie is gone."

"Cassie?" repeated Alvin, vacantly. So engrossed was Alvin with his own joys in time of joy, and with his own sorrows in time of sorrow, that persons not immediately associated with him disappeared entirely from the circle of his consciousness.

"Why, yes, Cassie Hartman, David's mom. David is now an orphan."

Alvin shook his head solemnly at this intelligence, remembering that he was practically an orphan, too. Beyond that he did not consider the situation. He felt no satisfaction at the Hartmans' misfortunes; he had never cherished any animosity toward them, but only a vague envy of their worldly possessions.

"I am here now to see why you do not come to your dinner," went on Sarah Ann. "The folks say you are not going to get married, after all, Alvin. Is it so, Alvin? I thought you were sick. I had Sauerkraut for dinner, but still you did not come. I can heat it for supper. Ach, there is nothing but trouble in this world!"

Alvin desired to tell Sarah Ann all his woes. Like the Ancient Mariner, he would find relief in recounting the story of his griefs. But he was now too weak to do anything but select a hat from the row hanging behind the door. So low was he in his mind that he chose the shabbiest one of all. Then he followed Sarah Ann down the street. It seemed to him that there were many inches between the front of his body and his vest. He was certain that he had lost many pounds, and he thought that perhaps he would waste away. That, he decided gloomily, would be one solution of his troubles.

Once fed, Alvin felt his spirits rise. There was that in Sarah Ann's substantial victuals which was calculated to put heart into a man, there was tonic in her urging, tearful though it was.

"Ach, a little pie, Alvin, if it is you good enough! It is not to-day's pie, but yesterday's pie, but it is not yet soft. Some pies get softer than others quicker. Ach, a little rusk, too, Alvin! It stood round long enough already. Take jelly for on it, Alvin. Rusk is not good without a spread. It is too dry."

When Alvin had finished the first course, he no longer felt physically shrunken; when he had finished the second, he had ceased entirely to be conscious of the deadly twist of Bevy's grasp upon his ear. Of Katy and the squire no amount of food could hearten him to think.

But when he had finished his supper and had thanked Sarah Ann and had shut himself out of her pleasant kitchen into a cold damp night, he remembered that he had no place to go. On other Saturdays he had sought the home of Bessie in the county seat, but he could not go there now.

"I have no father and no mother and no friends," mourned Alvin to himself. "I am an outcast. I must go back to my cold house."

The wind made the limbs of the trees creak above his head; loose bricks sank sloppily under his feet, splashing his ankles; his heart sank lower and lower. The street lamps burned dimly; as most of the citizens of Millerstown sat in the kitchens, the fronts of their houses were dark and inhospitable. For his own lamp at home he had no oil and no money to buy oil. But home he must go. He saw ahead of him two men, one tall and young, the other broader of shoulder, and not so tall. He recognized them as the squire and David Hartman; he realized dully that David had just come home to his empty house, but his thought accompanied the two men no farther than the next street lamp.

There, mental as well as physical light flashed into Alvin's gloom. The Improved New Mennonites were in the midst of a series of meetings; into the misty darkness of the street their light shone pleasantly, into the lonely quiet their song poured cheerfully. Here was an invitation.

At once Alvin turned his steps toward their little church. He remembered with a thrill, a weak thrill it is true, but none the less a thrill, Essie's pretty face, her curly hair, her friendly glance. To a church every one was welcome. He went in and sat down humbly in the last pew, — no high seat for Alvin in his present state of mind! He saw in the front row no little, round head of Bevy Schnepp with its tight knot of hair at the back. Involuntarily and with great relief Alvin lifted a hand to his own head.

The preacher either directed his sermon toward Alvin, or else happened accidentally upon a text applicable to that young gentleman's condition. He reproved those whose hearts were set on worldly possessions, and Alvin groaned within himself. Doorknobs were a sign of pride — Alvin had himself set a glittering knob upon the jamb of his front door. Organs in the parlor were a snare — Alvin had long since discussed the purchase of a piano with a piano dealer. Fine clothes spelled perdition.

Poor Alvin began to wish himself out upon the dark street. If what the preacher said were true, then he was lost. It is hard to say what Alvin's views of the preacher's discourse would have been if he could have continued to call his own his dear belongings. Now that they were to be taken from him, he felt that it was wrong ever to have had them.

Then, in the depths to which he sank, Alvin longed again more desperately than ever to make confession and to be absolved. He could not endure another listener so hard-hearted as the squire; he craved a sympathetic ear, a tender eye, — a feminine eye and ear, in short.

The sermon ended, pretty Essie went to the organ. Facing the audience she looked at each one, sighing a little at the dullness of life. Then Essie's lovely eyes brightened. Alvin Koehler was here! Alvin's gaze was upon her; Alvin, in spite of the unusual disarray of his clothes, was still handsome; his eyes responded to her glance before she looked down at her music. During the course of the hymn Essie looked at him again; gradually her eyes narrowed; into them came a startled expression. She could see the change in his appearance; his jauntiness was gone; he was no longer the accepted lover. Into Essie's eyes came an intent expression like that which brightens the eyes of a hunter as he sees the approach of his game. Alvin was not himself; he was in trouble. Unconsciously Essie quickened the time of her hymn so that it changed from a dirge, intended to soften the hearts of the impenitent, to a gay, triumphant measure. Fortunately, the hymn was already near its end; there was no chance for the preacher to observe the quickening of the tune.

Waiting outside the door, Alvin joined Essie as she came from the church. Her father lingered within to talk to some of his members; there was opportunity for long and earnest discourse as Alvin walked by the side of Essie.

"You see how it was," said Alvin from time to time. Or, "That was why I did it!"

"She made me get everything ready," complained Alvin, bitterly. "Then, when I had gone to all this expense and was in debt to it yet, she would n't have me, and I had used my salary ahead, and I — I took a little money to help myself out. It was money I might have had if I had asked. But I did n't like to ask. It was in a way, you might say, mine. But I meant to put it back, Essie!"

Wisely Alvin entered into no further particulars, nor did he tell the name of the person from whom he had taken the money. Somehow Essie got the impression that it was the squire. That impression Essie was allowed to keep.

"Then you have sin on your mind." Thus with glowing cheeks Essie diagnosed Alvin's case. In reality Alvin had no sin, but the fear of punishment on his mind.

"Yes," he said.

Essie's cheeks glowed more brightly; she clasped her hands. She was not only curing the invalid, she was binding him to his physician forever.

"You must make everything right," she declared. "Everything down to the last penny. Then you will have peace, Alvin, and not before. You must go back to your childhood. Can you remember anything else you did?"

"I took cherries from trees already," confessed Alvin. "I put once five cents in the church collection and took six cents change out. I took often the cakes that Bevy Schnepp baked and put in a hole for — for" — here Alvin had the grace to gulp mightily — "for other children. Ach, Essie!" Alvin was terrified by the stern gaze bent upon him. He had expected to take her hand, to lay his head on her shoulder, to touch her soft cheek. It was a long time, or it seemed a long time, since Alvin had touched a soft cheek. But instead of soothing him, Essie grew each moment colder and more distant. "Don't turn away from me! I will do everything you say. What shall I do?"

"You must make all these things right," commanded the young judge. "That is the only way."

"Dare I, then, come to see you, Essie? You will not turn me off?"

"You must make it right with all these people," insisted Essie again. She had taken Alvin into the little sitting-room of her father's house. She rose now and moved to the back of her chair as though to put a barrier between herself and Alvin.

Alvin went home and sat him down at his table. The March wind had begun to blow again; Alvin's fire was pitifully small; he anticipated the dreary Sunday with horror.

"Oh, my soul!" wailed poor Alvin. "Oh, my soul!"

Once more he set himself to work with paper and pencil. There was Sarah Ann — he had often picked raspberries as he passed along her fence, but Sarah Ann would willingly forgive him. It would be ridiculous even to ask Sarah Ann. Mom Fackenthal would forgive him also for the cherries he had taken. There was Bevy — to banish this gnawing misery from his heart he could approach even Bevy.

When he had determined upon a course of action, he went to bed and slept soundly. The course of action, it must be confessed, would seem very strange to a person of common sense. But Alvin did not have common sense.

In the morning he slept late; in the evening he went to the church of the Improved New Mennonites. He would walk home with Essie, he would talk over his plans with her. Even a medical clinic involving the shedding of blood would not have been altogether unpleasant to Alvin if he could have been the subject.

But Essie would scarcely speak to him. She wore under her chin a blue bow, about as much of a decoration as her principles would allow, and she was an alluring spectacle. When Alvin stepped to her side, she asked him a single question, her eyes narrowing again like a fisherman's.

"Have you made everything right?"

"This was Sunday!" Alvin reminded her.

Essie made no friendly motion, but shook her head solemnly and went on alone.

In the morning before school Alvin visited Mom Fackenthal.

"Cherries!" said that pleasant old lady. "It is not time yet for cherries. You want to pay for cherries?" Mom Fackenthal was slightly deaf. "You don't owe me anything for cherries. Cherries that you *stole?* When did you steal cherries? When you were little! Humbug! Not a cent, Alvin. Keep your money. Why, all boys take cherries, that is why there are so many. Are you *crazy*, Alvin?"

With Sarah Ann the result of his interview was the same.

"You took my raspberries, you say? Why, I planted those raspberries near the fence for the children. You were welcome to them, Alvin."

But the way of peace was not always so easy.

"What!" roared Bevy, furious because he dared to approach her. "You stole cakes off of me! I bet you did, Alvin. You want to pay me? Nothing of the kind. You pay Katy what you owe her. Get out of here!"

Threatened with the broom, Alvin stood his ground bravely. As a matter of fact, Bevy had been strictly charged by the squire to let no word of what had happened escape her. But there was no reason why she should not give Alvin a piece of her mind.

"You are good-for-nothing, Alvin. I should think you would be ashamed of yourself. I should think you would go and hide!"

Then upon the angry fire of Bevy's rage, Alvin undertook to pour the water of a pleasant announcement.

"I am going to join your church, Bevy."

"Nonsense!" shrieked Bevy. "Humbug! They would n't have you!"

Alvin grew maudlin in his humility.

"I wish you would like me a little, Bevy."

"The farther away you are the better I like you," shrieked Bevy like a fury.

The news of Alvin's strange seeking for forgiveness followed close upon the rumor that the lady of his choice had rejected him. Millerstown looked at him with interest and pity. Even the landlord and the coal dealer felt a slight softening of the heart. The children in school were obedient for the first time in months.

But there still remained several persons for Alvin to see. He had as yet not approached the coal dealer and the landlord. Nor had he yet interviewed his chief debtor. Her Alvin did not dare to visit. Nor did he wish to approach the landlord and the coal dealer until he had a little money. But until things were made right, Essie would have none of him. Monday evening Alvin devoted to thought.

On Tuesday evening he paid a mysterious visit to the editor of the Millerstown "Star." On Wednesday evening he attended the prayer-meeting of the Improved New Mennonites. He was a little late because he had stopped at the post-office. From his pocket protruded a newspaper.

Without asking permission, he joined Essie on the homeward way; without invitation he followed her into the house. He drew the paper from his pocket and offered it to Essie. No one but an Improved New Mennonite or an acolyte of the Improved New Mennonites could have manufactured so remarkable a document.

"What is it?" said Essie as she took the paper.

"There," answered Alvin, pointing.

Essie's eyes followed his finger down the first column of the first page. Sarah Ann Mohr would find this week more food for thought and discussion in the Millerstown local news than in the account of men turning into lions.

"If I have done injury to any one," read Essie, "I ask that they forgive me. ALVIN KOEHLER."

Essie's eyes did not lift from the page for a long time. When they did, they had ceased to burn. Since her first advent into Millerstown, Essie had longed for a possession which she considered precious. Now, at last, it was hers. Now, at last, also was there hope for Alvin.

CHAPTER XVIII

A SILVER CHALICE

WITH knees trembling and lips quivering, Katy hastened across the Hartman lawn. She was still smarting too hotly from the shock of her loss and the shame of discovery to realize how great a burden had been lifted from her shoulders by the mere sharing of her secret. Poor Alvin seemed meaner than he was, her association with him criminal, herself imbecilic. She remembered his touch with loathing, his beseeching gaze with disgust. She thought of his father, with his queer, glancing eyes, his muttering, his praying. It was no wonder that David Hartman despised them. She saw herself through David's scornful eyes; she remembered the outrageous struggle at the Sheep Stable; she could have sunk through the ground in her distress.

But David had been avenged. Against her new madness of affection Katy was still struggling. By night she dreamed of David, by day she thought of David. Her care of Cassie, her sweeping and cleaning of the great house, had become labors of love.

"I do not think even any more of education," mourned Katy in her alarm. "I am at last quite crazy."

She hurried now into the Hartman kitchen, alarmed because she had been so long away. Cassie grew daily worse, a little less able to make the journey from her bed to the settle in the kitchen, a little more preoccupied, a little more silent. Katy's attentions troubled her, she did not like to have a hand laid upon her shoulder or an arm thrown round her. Once, when she had insisted upon going about the house, she had fainted, and Katy had sent in terror for the doctor, and Cassie had been put to bed in her little room. When she had recovered in a measure, she told Katy where she would find in the drawers of one of the great bureaus certain clothes for her laying away. It was not a cheerful position which Katy held!

To-day Cassie had stayed in her bed, her cheek on her hand, her eyes closed. Often she lay thus for hours. She did not seem to think, often she did not seem to breathe. The atrophy of Cassie's mind and heart were almost complete.

Katy, opening the door softly, so as not to rouse Cassie if she slept, found the kitchen as she had left it, dark and silent and warm. She did not stop to take off the scarlet shawl which she had worn when she went to satisfy herself that her hoard was still in the putlock hole, but climbed at once the steep, narrow stairway which led to the rooms above. Her body ached for rest, but there was still bread to be set and the fire to be fixed for the night. There awaited Katy, also, a more difficult experience than these.

Upstairs, also, all was dark and quiet. Katy tiptoed across the hall to look in upon the invalid. With hands resting on the sides of the door, she peered in. She could see the outlines of the bureau and the narrow bed; she thought that she heard the even, regular breathing of the sleeper, and she was about to turn and go down the steps. Then a startling suspicion halted her. The bedcovers seemed to hang straight and even to the floor, the pillows to stand stiffly against the headboard; there was, after all, it seemed suddenly to Katy, no sound of breathing. For an instant she clung to the door frame, her back to the room, then she turned slowly and compelled herself to take the few short steps to the bed. There she felt about with her hands. The covers were smooth; instead of the hand or cheek of Cassie Hartman, she touched the starched ruffles of a fresh pillowcase.

"Cassie!" cried Katy in wild alarm.

There was no answer. Striving to make her voice sound louder, but only succeeding in uttering a fainter whisper, Katy cried again.

"Cassie! Where are you?"

Still there was no answer.

Frantically Katy fumbled about for a match. The room was in order, a smooth towel covered the bureau, the bed was freshly made as though for a stranger. Katy stared stupidly about her until the match burned her fingers and she was left in the darkness which seemed to close in upon her and smother her. The great house with its tremendous length and breadth, its many rooms, their blackness, the dark closets in the eaves into which one could accidentally shut one's self and die — the great house took shape about her, dim, mysterious, terrible. Strange forms seemed to be here in the room crowding upon her. Though she was aware that it threatened her, and though she tried desperately not to yield it entrance to her consciousness, the horrible recollection of John Hartman's face as he sat in his buggy on the mountain road, of the still whiteness of the faces of her own dead, crept slowly upon her. Must she go through this house searching for her mistress? She dared not go for aid, when Cassie might be lying in some corner helpless or dying. Cassie could scarcely get out of her bed alone. Where had she gone? Who had made up this bed?

Then, in time to save her reason, Katy heard a faint voice addressing her from a distant corner of the great house.

"Katy!"

Katy moved slowly along the dark hall.

"Ach, where are you?"

"Here," answered the faint voice.

Supporting herself against the wall, Katy crept along. At the end a door opened into the house proper, that seldom visited temple to the gods of order and cleanliness. The door now stood open.

"Are you sick?" gasped Katy. "Where are you? Did you fall?"

"No," came the slow answer. "I am here. You can make a light."

Falteringly Katy obeyed. On a bracket at the end of the hall hung a lamp; this she lighted with a great clattering of globe against chimney. Then, lifting the lamp, she carried it into the room from which the voice proceeded. Her scarlet shawl was still about her, her hair was disorderly from the squire's embrace, her eyes were wild and startled. She was a strange contrast to the room in which she stood.

Here was the great high bed with its carved posts, each terminating in a pineapple; here the interesting steps on which one mounted to the broad plateau of repose; here the fine curtains and the rich carpet, — all as Katy had left them after the last careful sweeping and dusting and polishing. But the bed had been disturbed; in it lay the mistress of the house, white and sick, but full of satisfaction over having accomplished her pitiful purpose.

Katy's wild eyes questioned her.

"It was time for me to come," announced Cassie, solemnly.

"It was time for you to come!" repeated Katy. "What do you mean?"

"My time has come," explained Cassie. "You are to go for the preacher."

Katy clasped her hands across her breast. She remembered now the bureau in which the white underclothes and the black dress were kept. She began to cry.

"Oh, no! I will go for the doctor! You should n't have done this! You have made yourself worse! I will get you the medicine the doctor gave you, then I will run for him."

"You will go for the preacher," directed Cassie, wearily. "My time has come."

Katy looked wildly about her, but found no help either in the thick carpet or the heavy hangings. She was afraid to go, yet she did not dare to stay. Cassie sank a little deeper into her pillows, the shadows under her eyes seemed to darken, the covers moved with her throbbing heart.

"Go!" she commanded thickly.

Katy ran down the steps through the kitchen and out to the gate. The preacher lived nearer than the doctor; a single knock and his window was lifted.

"Cassie Hartman must see you!" cried Katy. "She is very low. Bring the doctor and come quickly."

Without staying to hear whether there were any questions to be answered, Katy flew back into the dark kitchen and up the narrow stairs. Cassie lay with her eyes closed, her hands folded across her breast.

"The front door should be opened, and there should be a light," she gasped.

"I cannot leave you!"

"Go!" said Cassie.

Again Katy flew to obey. David should be sent for; must she remind them that David should be sent for? It seemed to Katy that any observer could see her obsession in her face.

"You know where my things are, Katy," whispered Cassie.

"Yes, I know! But you are not going to die!"

"My time has come," said Mrs. Hartman. "Everything is attended to and written out in the desk. You can tell the squire."

"I will," faltered Katy, standing between the tall pillars at the foot of the bed. She remembered the squire's face as he came to tell her grandmother that Grandfather Gaumer was dead; she thought of David and David's face when he should be told. David would be alone in the world; surely, though he had all its riches, he would care! Surely his mother had a message for him. The preacher was a newcomer; he did not know David; he should give him no message from his mother! And Dr. Benner should give him no message from his mother. Katy clasped her hands a little more closely and looked down upon Cassie.

"And David?"

Cassie's eyelids quivered, but she made no reply.

"Some one must send for David!"

When Cassie still made no answer, Katy came round the corner of the bed and stood by the pillow.

"Suppose" — Katy stammered and faltered — "suppose — shall anything be said to David if — if —"

"David will find everything ready," said Cassie, wearily. "He will find everything in order."

Katy leaned over the pillow. Cassie could not know what it was to die, to go away forever; Cassie could not know how one wept and mourned when those whom one loved had died; could not know how one remembered every word, cherished every caress. David had no one else, and David was young; David could not be so hard of heart as he seemed or Cassie so stony. There was hardly a person in Millerstown who would have ventured to oppose Cassie, or to persuade her against her will. But all the characteristics of Katy's youth had not vanished; still, seeing a goal, she moved toward it, disregarding obstacles. It seemed to her that she heard the gate swing open and shut, heard the sound of voices, of rapid footsteps. The preacher and the doctor were coming, and probably other Millerstonians would come with them. She took Cassie by the hand and was terrified by its chill.

"Do you not leave your love for David?" she asked, crying.

Cassie looked up at her with no other expression than slight astonishment, as though Katy's language were strange. Cassie loved nothing that could turn and rend her. John had turned and had rent her, but in David's case she had had a care for herself, from misery there she had sternly and bravely defended herself. This bright-eyed Katy with her light step and her pretty ways had disturbed her, had set her to dreaming at night of a house filled with children, of growing boys and girls who would have loved their mother and cherished her.

And here this same Katy hung above her, clung to her, would not, thought poor Cassie, would not let her die as she had planned! She did not know that hardness of heart was in her a more terrible hurt than any offense which love could have brought. In her weakness she felt a sudden quiver of life in that heart of stone; it seemed as though it melted to water.

But she would not yield. She tried to draw her hand away from the grasp which held it; she closed her eyes; she remembered how she had defended herself against grief. But she could not get her weak hand away, could not shut out the sound of Katy's voice.

"What shall I tell David? Let me tell David something from his mother. Why, David loves you! David will grieve for you! Oh, please!" She lifted Mrs. Hartman's white hand and held it against her cheek, as though she would compel a blessing. "Oh, please let me tell David something!"

But no word was spoken, no tears stole out from under the closed lids. The lids quivered, opened and closed; beyond that slight motion there was nothing. Already the preacher and the doctor were ascending the steps. To both the serious condition of the invalid was evident. The doctor told Katy in his dictatorial way that she should not have allowed Mrs. Hartman to leave her bed. The doctor always spoke to Katy with irritation, as though he could not quite escape the recollection of promises made and forgotten.

Cassie lay quietly with her hands clasped once more on her breast. Her eyes were open now; she spoke clearly in a weak voice, the self-control, fostered through years, serving her still. She signified that she wished her pastor to give her the communion, for which purpose he had brought with him his silver flask and chalice and paten. These he spread out on the little table at the head of Cassie's bed.

On the other side of the bed stood Katy, with wide, tearful eyes and white cheeks. The scene was almost too solemn for endurance; the great catafalque of a bed with its white valances and draperies, the dark shadows in the corners of the room, the deep silence of the night, the brightly illuminated, earnest faces of the doctor and the preacher. But all seemed to make Katy's eyes more clear to see, her heart more keen to remember. Her thoughts went back over all the solemn services she had witnessed, the watch-night services of her childhood, the communion services, the hour of her grandmother's passing. She remembered the clear nights when she had run through the snow with Whiskey and had been at once so unhappy and so happy. How foolish to be unhappy then when she had everything! She remembered even that morning, long, long ago, when John Hartman had frightened her. Surely, as her grandmother said, she must have imagined that rage! She was nothing to John Hartman.

The minister had poured the wine from the flask into the chalice, and had broken the bread. He lifted the chalice and the light flashed from its bright surface.

"Drink ye all of it," he began gravely in his deep voice.

Then Katy heard no more. She put her arm tightly round the tall post of the bed and clung and clung to it as though a great creature or a great wave threatened to drag her from her feet. She looked far away across the wide bed, through the walls of the great house, over the village and the fields to the church on the hill. She was a child again in a red dress, and she had run unsteadily out the brick walk from her grandmother's kitchen door to the gate, out to the blessed, free, forbidden open road. She had talked to herself happily; she had stopped to pull leaves which still lingered on the Virginia creeper vines on the fences.

Presently, when she had trotted past the first field, the open door of the church had attracted her. She had been taken to church a few times; she remembered the singing — even that early had the strange performance of Henny Wenner fascinated her; she now turned her steps toward the delightful place. In the church an interesting man was at work with a little trowel and beautiful soft mortar, and she had watched him until she had grown sleepy, whereupon, with that feeling of possession in all the world which had been hers so keenly in her childhood, she had laid herself down on the soft cushion of a pew.

When she woke the interesting little man with his trowel was no longer in the church. Another man had taken his place before the hole in the church wall, and spying her suddenly had driven her out with anger. She had not thought of it for years; they had persuaded her that she had dreamed it; had told her that if John Hartman had ever spoken to her sharply, it was only to send her home where she belonged, that he could have against her no unkindly feeling.

But now it came back, strangely illumined. John Hartman had driven her away angrily, and John Hartman had held in his hand a silver cup, the shape of the one which the preacher held to Cassie's pale lips, but larger, handsomer. Upon it the sun had flashed as the lamplight flashed now upon this smaller cup.

At first Katy only remembered vaguely that there had been trouble about the communion service, that it had disappeared, that dishonest Alvin's dishonest and crazy father had taken it. The thought of Alvin brought to her mind a new set of sensations, confusing her.

"He held it in his hand," whispered Katy to herself. "Then he pushed it into the hole, quickly. I saw him do it!"

She leaned her head against the tall bedpost, and did not hear the command of the doctor to bring water.

"Katy!" said he, again, a little more loudly.

Still Katy did not stir. The preacher looked up also, and his communion service now over, came quickly with an alarmed glance at Katy round the great bed and took her by the arm. Her muscles were stiff; she had only one conscious thought — to cling to the thing nearest to her. The minister unclasped her hand and half carrying her, half leading her, took her down to the kitchen and laid her upon the settle. When he had taken the water to the doctor, he came back, to find Katy sitting up and looking about her in a dazed fashion.

"You had better lie down," bade the preacher.

Katy shook her head. "I cannot lie down."

"This has been too much for you," went on the preacher kindly. "My wife is coming now to stay. You cannot do anything more for poor Mrs. Hartman. If I were you I would go home. When the rest come I will walk down the street with you."

Katy looked at him with somber eyes and did not move.

"This house is no place for you, Katy."

Katy shivered; then she got to her feet. She remembered her aching desire to console David, her vague plans; she saw again the shining, silver chalice, the startled, terrified face of David's father as she tugged at his coat.

"No," agreed Katy with a stiff tongue. "You have right. This house is no place for me.",

CHAPTER XIX

THE SQUIRE AND DAVID TAKE A JOURNEY BY NIGHT

On Saturday evening David returned to Millerstown and for the second time in his life entered his father's house — his house now — by the front door. There were friendly lights here and there; the squire, who had met him at the train, slipped a kindly hand under his arm as they ascended the steps and crossed the porch. To the squire the Hartmans were queer, unhuman. But David looked worn and miserable; perhaps they suffered more than one thought. In his first confusion after the disappearance of the communion service, John Hartman had behaved so strangely toward his old friend that the squire had avoided him as a burnt child avoids the fire. But that was long ago, and here was this boy come home to his mother's funeral. The squire patted David's shoulder as they entered the door.

David glanced with a shiver toward the room upon the left where he had caught the first glimpse of the bed upon which his father lay. But the door was closed; Cassie had not been moved from the catafalque upon which she died.

From the dim end of the long hall, a short figure advanced to meet the two men. It was not Katy, who had resigned her place, but Bevy, who had come to stay until the funeral was over. Bevy shook hands with David solemnly, looking up at him with awe, as the owner of farms and orchards and this great house and unreckoned bank stock. She had spread his supper in the kitchen, and the squire sat with him while he ate. Then the two men went upstairs together.

In Cassie's room a light burned faintly. The squire turned it higher and then looked at David.

"Shall I go down, David?"

"No," said David.

The squire crossed the room slowly and laid back the cover from Cassie's face; then both men stood still, looking first at the figure on the bed, then at each other. Cassie had always been beautiful, but now an unearthly loveliness lighted her face. Her dark hair was braided high on her head; her broad forehead with its beautifully arched brows seemed to shed an actual radiance. David had never observed his mother's beauty, but now, in the last few months, he had wakened to aspects to which he had been blind. He had seen beautiful women; he could compare them with his mother as she lay before him. He looked at her hands, still shapely in spite of the hard toil of her life, folded now across her quiet breast; he noted the shape of her forehead; he saw the smile with which she seemed to be contemplating some secret and lovely thing.

Upon the squire the sight of Cassie made a deep impression. Tears came into his eyes, and he shook his head as though before him lay an unfathomable mystery. He felt about her as he might have felt about some young person cut off in youth. Here was extraordinary promise, here was pitiful blight. The squire had observed human nature in many unusual and pathetic situations, here was the most pathetic of all. The Hartmans could not be understood.

Then the squire, glancing at David, went out and closed the door and left him with his mother.

In dumb confusion, David stood by the great bed. More vaguely, the squire's puzzle was his also. His mother had had an empty life — it should not have been empty. He could not understand her, he could not understand his father. They had put him away from them. The old resentful, heart-breaking misery came back; he had no people, he had no one who loved him. Then resentment faded and grief filled him. Like a lover, refused, rejected, he knelt down beside the great bed.

"Oh, mother!" cried David, again and again. "Oh, mother, mother!" Then the old, unanswered, unanswerable cry, "Speak to me!"

From the great bed came no sign. David rose presently and laid back the cover over the smiling lips and turned the light low and went down to join the squire. Composedly he made plans with him for the funeral. The squire announced that he and Bevy had come to take up their abode unless David wished to be alone. The squire looked at David, startled. In the last year David had grown more than ever like his parents; he had his mother's features and his father's deep gray eyes and thickly curling hair.

"When you are through your school, you must settle down in Millerstown," said the squire. "There ought to be little folks here in this house."

David's heart leaped, then sank back to its place. He had cured himself of Katy Gaumer; such flashes were only meaningless recollections of past habit.

"I am thinking of studying law," he told the squire. "That will keep me in school three years more. And then I could n't practice law in Millerstown."

"The Hartmans are not lawyers," said the squire. "The Hartmans are farmers. You would have plenty to keep you busy, David."

If old habit caused David to look for Katy Gaumer, David's eyes were not gratified by what they sought. Neither before his mother's funeral nor afterward did she appear. Bevy had removed her few belongings from David's room before he returned; there remained in the Hartman house no evidence of her presence. Bevy said that Katy was tired, that she lay all day on the settle in her uncle's kitchen. Bevy longed to pour out to David an account of Katy's treatment at the hands of Alvin Koehler, prospective church member though he was. But she had been forbidden by the squire to open her lips on the subject; and, besides, David

Hartman, the heir to all this magnificence, could hardly be expected to take an interest in one who had demeaned herself to become his mother's servant. Nevertheless, a wild scheme formed itself in Bevy's mind.

"Sometimes Katy cries," reported Bevy sentimentally to David. "It seems as though this brought back everything about her gran'mom and everything. Yesterday she was real sick, but to-day she complains better again. Katy has had a good deal of trouble in this world."

David frowned. He was going back to college in the morning; his bag was already packed. Katy had been in the house until the time of his mother's death; she should have asked him to come to see her. Old habit tempted him to play once more with fire.

"I would like to see Katy," he said now to Bevy.

"Well!" Bevy faced him with arms akimbo, her little eyes sparkling. "I will tell Katy that she shall come here once this evening."

"No," answered David, who had got beyond the simple ways of Millerstown. "Ask her whether I may come to see her this evening."

"Of course, you can come to see her!" cried Bevy. "I will just tell her you are coming."

But Bevy returned with an astonishing message. Bevy was amazed at Katy's temerity. She had planned that she would suggest to Edwin's Sally that she and Edwin go to bed and leave the kitchen to David and Katy.

"She only cried and said you should not come. Sally said I must leave her alone. She said the squire said and Edwin said that Katy must be left alone. Katy is not herself."

In June David returned to Millerstown with trunks and boxes to stay for the summer, at least. Upon his face a fresh record was written. He looked older, his lips were more firmly set. His last term had been easy; he had permitted himself holidays; he had visited New York, had seen great ships, had climbed great buildings, had learned, or thought that he had learned, that money can buy anything in the world. He had talked for defiance' sake with the pretty girl who had told him so sweetly long ago that the college town was glad of his presence. The pretty girl smiled upon him even more sweetly; it was clear to David's eyes that his blunder was nothing to her. He talked to other girls; it was equally clear that they were glad to forget any blunders of the past. He had not yet made up his mind what he would do with this great world which he could buy. Its evil was as plain to him as its good, but he meant to have all of it. It was as though David gathered together the pipe and cards flung into the tree-tops from the Sheep Stable.

It was late in the afternoon when he arrived in Millerstown. Main Street lay quiet and golden in the sunshine. It was supper time and the Millerstonians were indoors. Few persons saw him come, and those few stood in too great awe of him to invite him to their houses. He met Katy Gaumer as he turned the corner sharply, and Katy gasped and looked at him somberly, standing still in a strange way to let him pass. She answered his greeting without lifting her head. Old habit made David grit his teeth.

Upon her doorstep sat the little Improved New Mennonite, her supper finished. She was prettier than ever. By nature a manager, she had reduced Alvin's financial and other troubles to their simplest terms, and there was now hope of a happy issue from them. Alvin himself, though at peace, was not exactly happy. He had been held so diligently to his work, he had been compelled to dress so plainly that he was much depressed in spirit. Red neckties were now anathema; masculine adherents of the sect of the Improved New Mennonites, indeed, abjured neckties altogether, and Alvin feared that the black one to which he was reduced would presently also be taken from him. In her practical way Essie had long since decided that the rented house in the village could not be considered as an abode, but that the little house on the mountain-side must be returned to.

To the side of the little Mennonite came David when he had opened the windows of his house. The place was desolate. The baffling sense of his mother's presence, even the consciousness of his father's, so long past, were intolerable. He would not endure this discomfort. He was young, ought to have happiness, would have it. Essie Hill was lovely to look at, she admired him, she was a woman; he would go and talk to Essie. He wished that he had brought her a present, but he could order one for her. If he stayed in Millerstown this summer Essie would be a pleasant diversion.

From the doorstep Essie looked up at him. Then, as he prepared to sit down beside her, she drew away, blushing primly.

"I am going to be married," said she. "I think I ought to tell you."

David grew suddenly pale. If a pigeon had turned from his caress to attack him with talons, if a board from his walk had arisen to smite him, he could not have been more astounded.

"To whom?" said he.

"I am going to marry Alvin."

"Alvin who?" asked David, bewildered.

"Alvin Koehler."

Then was David's pride wounded! He wished Essie well with a steady voice, however, and went on to the post-office and back to his house and sat down on the dark back porch. How he hated them all, these miserable people, but how he hated most of all Alvin Koehler. It was not, he remembered, the first time that Alvin had been preferred to him. He thought again of William, gibbering and praying in the corner of the almshouse garden. God had put him there. It was a proof that God existed that he had punished Alvin's father. And Alvin should be punished, too. David knew of the mortgage among his father's papers. It was only by his father's grace that the Koehlers had been allowed to live so long on the mountain-side. That house should continue in their possession no longer. Other schemes for revenge came into his mind. He sat miserably, his head buried in his hands as though he were a tramp waiting for food instead of the heir of the house come home to take possession.

He did not hear the sound of a step on the brick walk. Suddenly, a girl screamed lightly and he lifted his head, then sprang to his feet.

"What is it?" he cried to the ghostly figure. "Who are you?"

"I did n't mean to scream," said Katy Gaumer. "I did n't see you at first and I was frightened. I thought it was some stranger."

"It is I," said David, gruffly. Katy's figure had seemed like an apparition in the dim light; he had been horribly startled.

"I want to see you, David," said Katy, hesitatingly. "I have something I must talk to you about."

"I'll make a light inside."

"I'd rather talk here," said Katy. "I'll sit here on the step. I don't believe any one will come."

David offered her a chair. The blood was pounding in his temples, his wrists felt weak.

Katy had already seated herself on the low step. David sat on a chair on the porch; he could see her as she propped her elbows on her knees and made a cup for her chin with her hands. David breathed deeply; old habit was reasserting itself. Then he saw that Katy was trembling; to his amazement he heard her crying.

"You are n't well, Katy!"

"Yes," said Katy. "But I have a duty to do. It is hard. It nearly kills me."

David's thoughts leaped wildly from one possibility to another. What had she done? What could she have done? Here was Katy in a new light, weeping, distressed.

"What is it, Katy? Don't be afraid to tell me."

"I am afraid to tell you." Katy turned her white face toward him. "But I must tell you. It has been on my mind day and night. I have tried to think of another way, but I cannot."

"But what is it?"

"When I was a little girl and lived with my grandfather and grandmother, I used to run away, and one day I ran away to the church. Alvin Koehler's father was there plastering the wall, and I watched him, and after a while I went to sleep in a pew. When I woke up Alvin's father was gone, but your father was there, David."

David gave a great start.

"You cannot say anything to me against my father!"

"But I must tell you, David. You will have to decide what is to be done. I have n't told the squire or any one, but you must know. It has been on my mind all this time. I can't rest or sleep any more. I went up to your father and he spoke roughly to me, and then I ran out and went home to my grandmother. She laughed at me and said your father was only chasing me home where I ought to be. After a while I believed it. Then Alvin Koehler's father got up at the funeral and talked about the communion set and I did n't believe such a thing for a minute, not a minute. Alvin is not — is not — very honest — and I never believed it."

"You did n't believe what?" said David with a dry throat. "What in this world are you talking about?"

"I did n't believe for a minute that your father would have anything to do with taking the communion set. I —"

"He did n't have anything to do with it," cried David. "What nonsense is this?"

Katy covered her face with her hands. She went on mechanically as though she had prepared what she had to say.

"Before your mother died and the preacher came to give her communion, he lifted the cup high in the air and the light shone on it. Then I remembered everything that I had forgotten, how I had run away to the church and everything, and I knew that your father had the shining cup in his hand when I ran up to him. That was what I wanted — the shining cup. He was there with it in his hand; it is as plain as if it were now."

"I do not believe you!"

To this Katy returned no answer.

"Why did n't you tell it long ago?"

"I did n't remember this part till that night," said Katy, patiently. "But I could n't come and tell you then! I have thought over this and prayed over it. If I could bear it for you, I would, David. But I can't."

"I do not believe you," said David. "You imagined it. What could my father have wanted with the communion service? What could he have done with it?"

"There was a hole in the wall and he pushed it in quickly."

"A hole in the wall!"

"Alvin's father was mending the wall. There used to be a window there. I asked the squire about the window. Alvin's father was closing it up."

Into David's mind came a sickening recollection of the wild-eyed, desperate figure which had risen to shout out the terrible accusation.

"I do not believe it," he said again. "You have always helped Alvin Koehler. You helped him dishonestly in school. You are trying to help him now."

Katy's head bent a little lower over her knees.

"He does not even have sense enough to care for you or to be grateful to you."

Katy rose from her place on the low step. With a gasp she started down the walk.

"What are you going to do about it?" cried David, hoarsely.

"Nothing," answered Katy.

"You are going now to tell the squire!"

"No," said Katy, "I am not going to tell any one."

"Then why did you come here?" David followed her to the gate. "You have made trouble, you are always making trouble. If you are not going to do anything about it, why did you come here?"

"I had to tell you," insisted Katy, woefully. "Can't you see that I had to tell you?"

"It is not true," said David again. "If you think I will do anything against my father's name you are mistaken. You —"

But Katy had gone. He heard the familiar click of the gate, he heard her steps quicken. She was running away as from a house of plague.

Then David hid his face in his arms and sat long alone on the porch. He saw his father's stern face. His father had gone about — this there was no denying — like a man with a heavy load upon his heart. But that he should have had anything to do with the theft of a communion service, that he should even have touched it, that he, himself, knowing the truth, should have allowed another to be suspected — this was monstrous.

With rapid step David went up and down the porch. He would go away from Millerstown forever, that was certain. He would sell his house, his farms;

he would shake the dust of the place from his feet. But first he would clear the mind of Katy Gaumer from this outrageous suspicion and make it impossible for the slander to travel farther. As he made his plans, he stood still at the top of the porch steps, his head bent. Then he lifted his head with a sudden motion. There was for an instant a strangeness in the air, a sense of human presence. David felt blessed in his endeavor.

A few moments later he opened the door of the squire's office.

The squire, busy with his favorite occupation, the planning of a journey, sat with his feet comfortably elevated on the table. He let his chair slam to the floor and came forward to meet his guest.

"Well, David, now you are a graduate! Let me look at you! Now you are to stay with us. Why, David!" The squire stared at the countenance before him. "Are you in trouble?"

"Yes," answered David.

With the squire in his chair behind the desk, himself on the old settle, David told his story.

"Katy Gaumer came to the house this evening and told me a strange thing. She says that she saw my father with the communion cup in his hand the day that the service disappeared from the church."

"The communion cup?" repeated the squire, startled almost out of his wits. "What communion cup?"

"The one that disappeared."

The squire gasped.

"Katy saw him!" Here was Katy again, Katy who had seemed to them all to be such a promising child, Katy who was determined to go away to school, Katy who helped young rascals from her poverty, Katy who now would not study, who refused to do anything but sit dismally about! "Katy Gaumer," he repeated. "Our Katy?"

"Yes, Katy Gaumer," said David. "She says she was a little child and that she ran away from her grandmother to the church and saw my father put the silver cup into a hole made by plastering up the window."

"Impossible!" cried the squire. "Nonsense! Humbug! The girl is crazy. It could n't be!"

David looked at him and drew a deep breath.

"That was what I said. Then I thought of Koehler, and of how he had gone mad, and I knew my father would wish it investigated."

An electric shock tingled the squire's sensorium. He remembered the contorted face, the trembling hands, the terrible earnestness with which Koehler made his attack upon the dead man.

"What is your plan, David?" he asked.

"I thought we might get the key of the church and go out there and look about. It's bright moonlight and I believe we can see without making a light. I don't believe I can sleep until I have been out there and have looked about. I suppose we will have to get a key from the preacher."

"I have a key," said the squire. "But let us wait till to-morrow, David."

"I must go to-night," insisted David.

Only once were words exchanged on the journey. The two men went out the village street, past Grandfather Gaumer's, where a hundred sweet odors saluted them from the garden and where Katy lay weeping on her bed, to the path along the pike, between the open fields.

"You knew my father," said David. "Such a thing could not have been possible."

"I knew him from a boy," answered the squire heartily and honestly. "Such a thing could not have been possible."

"Had Koehler ever made this accusation before the time of my father's funeral?"

"He made it to the preacher after the service disappeared, but the preacher told him he must be still."

"Could Koehler have had any motive for taking it himself?"

"He was a poor man," answered the squire. "But he was simple and honest — all the Koehlers were."

"What do you suppose became of it?"

"I have always supposed that some one sneaked in while Koehler was away for a minute. A tramp could easily have walked in."

"Did my father never say that he had been in the church that afternoon?"

"Not that I know of."

The church door opened easily and quietly, the church was dim and silent. The tall, narrow windows, fitted with clear glass, let in the light of the moon upon the high pulpit, the oaken pews, the bare floor. The pulpit and the Bible were draped with protecting covers of white which made the church seem more ghostly and mysterious. Katy Gaumer in certain moods would have been enchanted.

Together the two men looked at the smooth wall beside the pulpit.

"It does n't seem as if that wall could ever have been broken," said David in a low voice. "Was the window there?"

"Yes," answered the squire. "There was a window there. But William Koehler was a fine plasterer. The window went almost from ceiling to floor."

"We would have to have a pickaxe and other tools. And we would have to ask for permission to open it. And all Millerstown would have to know," said David.

The squire pondered for an instant. "We would if we opened it from this side. But the Sunday School is built against the other side, and there there is only a little thin wainscoting to break through. It could be taken out and put back easily. There are tools here in the church somewhere."

The squire returned to the vestibule and opened the door of a cupboard.

"Here is a whole basket of tools. I do not like to make a light or every one will see. Millerstown is wonderful curious." The squire's light tone sounded strangely in the silence of the church, strangely to David and strangely to himself. "Don't you think, David" — the squire had his hand on the knob of the Sunday-School room door — "don't you think we had better wait till to-morrow?"

"No," answered David.

The squire passed on into the little Sunday-School room and David followed him.

"It's brighter here." The squire measured the wainscoting with his eye. "The old window ought to be about here. Sit down, David."

David obeyed, trembling.

"I don't believe I could open it," said he.

"Of course not!" answered the squire, cheerfully. "Do not worry, David. That silver has been melted this long time."

The squire thrust a chisel into a crevice and lifted out a section of wainscoting, then another. When three or four narrow strips were removed, he thrust his hand into the aperture. The moonlight grew brighter as the moon cleared the upper boughs of the old cherry trees outside the Sunday-School building; it shone upon a curious scene, the old man at his strange task, the young man watching so eagerly.

"There can't be anything here," said the squire, cheerfully. There can't be. This might just as well be made into a book cupboard for the Sunday

School; it is wasted space. It's queer we never thought of that. You see the church wall is four bricks thick here, and William's wall only one brick. It —"

The squire ceased suddenly to speak. His exploring hand had only now reached the bottom of the deep hole; it came into contact with a substance different from the fallen rubble which he expected to touch. David heard his voice die away, saw him start.

"What is it, sir?"

"There is something here," answered the squire.

David looked at the yawning hole with what courage he could muster. The squire thrust in his hand a little deeper, and groped about. Then, from the pit from which John Hartman might have lifted them easily had not all thought been paralyzed, he drew in their gray bag a pitcher, black with tarnish, and a silver plate, and set them on the floor beside him, and then a silver chalice. Still feeling about, he touched a paper and that, too, he lifted out and laid on the floor with the silver vessels.

Then, silently, he and David looked at each other.

CHAPTER XX

THE MYSTERY DEEPENS

For a long time neither the squire nor David spoke or moved. David sat on the bench where he had sat, a little boy at Sunday School, and the squire remained kneeling, forgetting his aching bones. When sharp pain reminded him of his years and his rheumatism, he rose and sat by David on the low, shallow bench.

"I can't understand it," said he again and again. "One cannot believe it. There was n't any motive. He could n't have wanted to steal it — such a thing would be entirely impossible. He was already rich; he was always well-behaved from his childhood up."

David did not answer. His face was in the shadow, only his tightly clasped hands were illuminated by the bright moonlight. His mind was confused, he could not yet coördinate his impressions. There was Katy Gaumer's story, there was Koehler's terrible accusation; here was this damning proof of both. He felt again that rising, protesting pride in his father, he felt a sickening unwillingness to go on with this investigation, which seemed to mean in his first confusion only an intolerable humbling of himself before Alvin Koehler, the effeminate, the smiling, the son of a madman and a thief. Poor David groaned.

At once the squire rose with a troubled sigh.

"We'd better put these things back and drive in a few nails to hold the wainscoting. We'll surely meet some one if we carry them into town and then the cat would be out of the bag."

David agreed with a nod.

"And here is this paper!" The squire started. Perhaps they were nearer an explanation than they thought. "Put it in your pocket, David."

David thrust the paper into his pocket with a sort of sob. The squire laid the precious vessels back on the rough floor of the little pit and put the wainscoting in place. A few light taps with a hammer and all was smooth once more as it had been for fifteen years. Then he led the way into the dim church.

"Come, David!"

David did not answer. He had sat down once more on the low bench. His thoughts had passed beyond himself; he sat once more beside his father's body here in the church. He experienced again that paralyzing horror of death, the passionate desire to shield his poor father from the curious eyes of Millerstown, his rage at the wild, dusty figure in the gallery. He remembered William Koehler as he had seen him later in the corner of the poorhouse garden, waving his arms, struggling like some frantic creature striving to break the bonds which held him. He saw the face of Alvin, empty, dissatisfied, vain. He remembered the little house, its poverty, its meanness. He remembered how he had called upon God to prove Himself to him by punishing Alvin Koehler's father. David was proud no more.

"Come, David!" urged the squire again, returning; and this time David followed him, through the church, out into the warm June night. Cinder was being dumped at the furnace, the sky flushed suddenly a rosy red, then the glow faded, leaving only the silvery moonlight. It was only nine o'clock; pleasant sounds rose from the village, the laughter of children, the voice of some one singing. Millerstown was going on in its quiet, happy way. At Grandfather Gaumer's all was dark; the house stood somberly among its pine trees; the garden still breathed forth its lovely odors. The two men proceeded into the little office of the squire, and there the squire lit his lamp and both sat down.

Trembling, David drew from his pocket the paper which the squire had found with the silver vessels. John Hartman had expected that long before the silver service was discovered the threatening letter would be destroyed. But here it lay in his son's hand, its fiber intact. It had caused John Hartman hideous suffering; it was to hide it that he had given his life's happiness; here now it lay in the hand of David. Slowly David unfolded the yellowed sheet and looked at it.

The squire, startled by a cry, turned from the door he was locking against possible intruders. David's blond head lay on the squire's desk, the paper beside it.

"What is it, David?"

David held out the paper, his face still hidden. The squire felt for his spectacles, his hand shaking. Here now was the explanation of this strange mystery, a mystery thought to be forever inexplicable. Why had John Hartman done this thing? The squire held his breath in suspense.

But the squire read no answer to his questions. The paper, old and yellowed and flabby to the touch, could be scrutinized forever, held to the light, magnified, but it told nothing. On it only a few words were legible, a portion of those written by John Hartman as he sat by the roadside in his misery long ago.

"My dear little boy." "My poor Cassie." There was one fragment of a sentence. "What shall I —" and there all ended.

The squire looked at the paper solemnly. The mystery had only thickened.

"He was in some trouble, poor Hartman was," said he. "He was in great trouble. I wish he had come to me in his trouble." Again and again the squire turned the paper over in his hand, still he found nothing but the few, scattered words.

"I think I will ask Katy to come over," said he. "Perhaps she can remember something more of this."

David did not lift his head to answer; he did not hear what the squire said. He tried desperately to control himself, to decide what must next be done. When Katy came in with the squire, he was startled almost out of his senses and sprang up hastily. Of all the ignominy of his life Katy had been a witness.

Katy had not gone to bed to stay, but had only hurled herself down once more upon her oft-used refuge. It was evident that she had shed many tears. The squire drew her to a seat beside him on the settle and kept hold of her. It was always natural for any one who was near Katy to find her hand or to touch the curls on her neck or to make her more comfortable with one's arm. To David, as she sat by the squire, she was an impregnably fortressed and cruel judge.

Again Katy told her story — all her story, her running away, her talking with William Koehler, her falling asleep, her sight of the shining cup.

"You say he *pushed* it in, Katy?"

"He had it in his hand and he dropped it in quickly. Then he — he sent me away. I am sure I ought not to have been in the church; it was all right for him to send me away. I remembered it all but the shining cup. If gran'mom was alive, she could tell you how I came running home."

"And you never told any one?"

"I spoke often of his having sent me home," explained Katy. "But I never remembered about the shining cup until the preacher came to see David's mother. Then I could n't tell David, — I *could n't* tell him! But perhaps it is n't there; perhaps even if he had the cup in his hand he had n't anything to do with the other; perhaps —"

"The silver is there," said the squire sadly. "We found it in the bottom of the pit."

"Oh, dear! oh, dear!" cried Katy.

David looked at her coldly. She sat with her curly head hidden against the squire's shoulder. David wished that she would go, that she would remove herself far from him, forever. He had suffered this evening to the limit of endurance.

"You did your duty," said he in the tone learned at college. "You need n't feel any further responsibility."

Thus propelled, Katy rose and checked her tears and passed out of the squire's office.

When she had gone, David took up his burden manfully, though somewhat savagely. David was proud once more, but the pride was that of honor, not of haughtiness. John Hartman had had a code of honor; it was that which had broken his heart. Millerstown had a similar code of honor. By inheritance or by observation had David learned the way of a just man.

"Now," said he, "we will find Alvin."

"To-night, David?"

"Yes, to-night."

"But Alvin will know nothing!"

"But we will find Alvin."

CHAPTER XXI

THE SQUIRE AND DAVID TAKE A JOURNEY BY DAY

DAVID and the squire had not gone far in their search for Alvin before David's mind changed. He did not care to seek him at the house of the little Improved New Mennonite or to ask the squire to take the long walk to Alvin's house on the mountainside. It would be better to follow the squire's suggestion and wait until morning.

"Then we will drive out to the poorhouse and see Koehler himself. He is the one to see. You'd better stay here to-night with me."

David shook his head. He wished to be alone; he had set a task for himself. Perhaps some letter or document had escaped him among those in his father's safe, some letter or document which could throw light on the strange past.

But David found nothing. He entered again into his great house, locked its doors, and opened the iron safe. There he read through ledgers and day books and mortgages and deeds in vain. He found nothing but the orderly papers of a careful business man. He looked again at the letter upon which the secret had been written, he held it up between him and the lamp, but the original writing was gone forever. It had been a letter, — of that there was no doubt, — his father's writing followed the spaces of a margin, but the text of the letter was gone.

In the morning the two men drove out the country road to the almshouse. The fields were green, wild roses and elder were in bloom, the air was sweet. A man could ask nothing better of fate than to be given a home and work in such a spot.

"They say Koehler has grown quieter," said the squire. "He does n't rave and pray this long time."

David did not answer. If another had visited such shame upon him, it would have been a long time before he would have grown quiet. David was now pale, now scarlet; he moistened his lips as though he were feverish. Reparation must be made, but what adequate reparation could be offered? Of money there was plenty, and Alvin, alas! could be satisfied with money; Alvin would probably never understand the awful hurt which had been done him. But his father — how could reason be returned to him?

In his corner in the almshouse garden they found William. The almshouse was a pleasant place with shady lawns and comfortable porches upon which old men could smoke their pipes and old women could sit knitting or shelling peas, or helping in other ways with the work for the large family. William Koehler never sat with the rest. He worked all day and then went back to his room like any self-respecting laborer. He was disinclined to speak; he was happiest on long, sunny days when he could be in the garden from dawn till twilight.

Now he was on his knees, weeding his cabbage plants. Another man would have done the work quickly with a hoe, but not so William. The delightful labor lasted longer if he pulled each weed by hand. Frequently he paused, to press down the soil a little more solidly about the roots of a plant or to say what sounded like an encouraging word. Thus had he been accustomed to talk to his chickens and his bees.

When the squire and David approached, he looked up from his work with a frown. At David he merely glanced; at the squire he stared. When he recognized him, he smiled faintly and rose from his knees.

"Well, William," said the squire, cheerfully. "Do you know me?"

"To be sure I know you."

"Come over here and sit down, William."

"I am very busy this morning," objected William, uneasily.

He answered the squire in Pennsylvania German. The years which had almost anglicized Millerstown had had no educating effect upon the residents of the county home.

"But I want to talk to you a little."

The squire took him in a friendly way by the arm, at which an expression of terror came into William's eyes, and he jerked away from the squire's grasp.

"I will come," he promised. "But I will come myself."

The squire led the way across the lawn to the shade of a great tree where two benches were placed at right angles. Upon one the squire and David sat down, upon the other William. The line between William's eyes deepened, his lips trembled, he pressed his hands, palm to palm, between his knees. The squire and David looked at each other. The squire, too, had grown pale; he shook his head involuntarily over the task which they were beginning. He, too, had had a share in William's condemnation, as had all Millerstown. The squire felt helpless. He remembered the mocking boys, the scornful, incredulous people; he recalled the gradual taking away of William's business by the new mason whom Millerstown imported and encouraged. The squire thought as David had of the years that could never be returned, of the reason which could never be restored. He took a long time to begin what he had to say. When William half rose as though to escape back to his garden, the squire came to himself and his duty with a start.

"William, do you remember anything about the window that you plastered shut in the church and about the communion set?"

William lifted his hands, then joined them on his breast. He shook now as with palsy. David, watching him, looked away to hide his tears. David was young, the wreck of William Koehler seemed a unique, horrible case.

Presently William answered in a low voice.

"God told me to be quiet. I prayed and prayed and God told me to be quiet. I am quiet now."

"But, William, you must tell us what you can remember. It will be for your good."

William opened his arms in a wild gesture, then clasped his hands again.

"A voice told me to forget it. I prayed till I heard a voice telling me to be quiet. You are tempting me! You are tempting me to disobey God. God said to be quiet about it!" He covered his face with his hands and began to weep aloud in a terrible way.

David crossed the little space between them and sat down beside him.

"You did n't take the communion set," he said. "We know you did n't take it."

William Koehler drew his hands away from his eyes and looked round at the young face beside him. Some tone of the voice startled him.

"Who are you?" he asked in astonishment. As he put the question he moved slowly and cautiously away, as though he planned to flee. "What do you mean to do with me?"

Together David and the squire rose. It was clear that William had heard as much as he could endure. His hands twitched, his eyes were as wild as any lunatic's.

"It does n't make any difference who I am," said David, steadily. "You are to remember that all the people know you did not take the communion set. You are to think of that all the time."

Again William began to weep, but in a different way.

"I cannot think of it," he sobbed. "God told me not to think of it. God told me to forgive him. I have forgiven him."

As the squire and David drove through the gate, William was kneeling once more among his cabbages. Sometimes he stopped and rubbed his head in a puzzled way, then his hands returned to caress the young plants.

Almost silently the two men drove back to Millerstown and up to the little white house on the mountain road. Standing before the door, David saw once more its littleness, its meanness. It seemed as though it could never have been altogether proof against the storms of winter. Looking back at his own great mansion among the trees he shivered. Imagination woke within him; he comprehended something of the lonely misery of poor William. It was a salutary though dreadful experience for David.

Alvin answered their knock at once. In a half-hearted, inefficient way he was trying to put the house into habitable condition. For the first time in his life he thought with respect of his father and of his father's work. His father could have applied the needed plaster and boards skillfully and quickly.

When Alvin saw who stood without he looked at them blankly. The difference between his worn clothes and David's fine apparel hurt him. He was always afraid of the squire. Together the three sat down on the porch. Here David was the spokesman. To him the squire listened with admiration and respect.

"Alvin, the communion service has been found."

Alvin looked at them more blankly than ever. The affair of the communion service belonged to the dim past; since he had thought of the communion service he had been away to school, and had been educated and jilted, and cruelly maltreated by Bevy Schnepp, and had become engaged once more. It was a long time before Alvin could remember the very close relation he bore to the communion service. When he remembered, his heart sank. He recalled clearly his father's trying, desperate appeal on Christmas Day so long ago. Had they come to make him pay for his father's theft?

"Your father insisted that my father had been in the church and had taken it," explained David.

"I never believed it," cried Alvin at once. He was now terrified. Were they going to make him suffer for his father's madness. "I never believed it! Pop could never get me to believe it," he assured them earnestly.

"But it is true, Alvin," insisted David. "Your father had nothing to do with it. He spoke the truth when he said that he knew nothing about it. A great wrong was done your father. I want to try to make part of it right with you and him."

Alvin gaped at them. It was difficult to comprehend this amazing offer.

"I have been to see your father, Alvin," David went on. "I hope you will forgive my father and me."

David spoke steadily. The request was easy to make now; even greater humbling of himself would have been easy.

Alvin responded in his own way. He remembered his long poverty, his lack of the things he wanted, the cruel price he had had to pay for his first beautiful red necktie.

"My father spent a great deal of money for detectives," he said, ruefully.

"That will be restored to him," said David. "Everything that I can do, I will do, Alvin."

When their errand was made perfectly clear to Alvin, he was terrified again, now by his good fortune. He was to have money, money to do what he liked with, more money than he actually needed! The mortgage was to be destroyed — the mention of that instrument had alarmed him for the moment. Was he only to be relieved of a burden of whose existence he had been to this time unaware? But there was more to come! The sum his father had spent was to be guessed at liberally and was to be put on interest for his father's support, and Alvin himself was to have recompense.

"Do you like teaching?" asked David. "Is there anything you would rather do?"

Alvin clasped his hands as though to assure himself by physical sensation that he was awake and that the words he heard were real. He cherished no malice, hoarded no hatred — that much could be said for Alvin who failed in many other ways.

"Oh, how I would like to have a store!" he cried. "If I could borrow the money from you to have a store, a store to sell clothes and shoes and such things! I do not like teaching. I am not a teacher. The children are naughty all the time for me. I —" Suddenly Alvin halted. No more in this world could he go his own sweet way; liberty now offered was already curtailed. A fixed star controlled now the steady orbit of his life. His bright color faded. "We would better talk to her about it," said he.

David Hartman forgot for an instant the Pennsylvania German idiom. It is an evidence of the monogamous nature of the true Pennsylvania German that the personal pronoun of the third person, used alone, applies but to one human being.

"To her?" repeated David, puzzled.

"Yes, to Essie Hill. I am going to be married to Essie Hill." Alvin rose. "Perhaps we could go down there," he proposed hesitatingly.

Together the trio went down the mountain road. The squire drove the buggy, Alvin and David walked. The squire kept ahead, so that the curtains on the back of the buggy sheltered him from the view of his companions. Thus hidden, he laughed until the buggy shook. To the squire Alvin could never be a tragic figure; he belonged on the stage of comedy or broad farce.

When the squire reached the house of the preacher of the Improved New Mennonites, he dismounted, tied his horse, and awaited the arrival of the young men. Then the three went in on the board walk to the kitchen, where Essie was singing, "They ask us why we're happy." Again the squire's face quivered.

Essie received her three guests in her calm, composed way. She put the interesting scallops on the edge of her cherry pie with a turn of her thumb, and invited the three gentlemen to have seats. Essie was neither an imaginative nor an inquisitive person. Her life was ordered, her thoughts did not circle far beyond herself. The tragedy suggested by the juxtaposition of these three persons did not occur to her. She sat primly with her hands folded and heard her visitors for their cause. Her eyes narrowed as she listened to David's statement of Alvin's desire for a store. It was true that Alvin did not like teaching, was not a success as a teacher. Essie had intended to think out some other way for him to earn the family living. Selling fine clothes would not be a sin like wearing them; indeed, one could preach a sermon by refraining from what was so near at hand and so tempting. That such a policy might be damaging to the family pocketbook, Essie did not realize for the moment. Essie was always most anxious that the sermon should be preached. Millerstown, however, fortunately for Alvin's success as a haberdasher, was set in its iniquity as far as the wearing of good clothes was concerned.

"I think it would be a very good thing for Alvin to have a store," said she.

"I want to do everything I can to make up for the past," explained David. "I can't make it right entirely. I wish I could."

To Essie the balancing of accounts always appealed.

"That is right," said she.

"But there is Alvin's father," David went on. "We cannot leave him where he is if he can be persuaded to come away. He does n't understand yet that we have discovered that he was not guilty, but we hope he may."

Essie answered without pause. Essie had as clear an idea of her own duty as she had of other people's — a rather uncommon quality.

"We will take him home to us," said she.

When the interview was over, David went with the squire to partake of Bevy's dinner. The squire and his two companions had not been unobserved in their progress through Millerstown. Sarah Ann Mohr, on her way to David's house with a loaf of fresh bread and a Schwenkfelder cake and two pies and a mess of fresh peas from her garden and with great curiosity in her kindly heart about David's future movements, saw the three, and stood still in her tracks and cried out, "Bei meiner Sex!" which meaningless exclamation well expressed the confusion of her mind. When they vanished into Essie's kitchen, she cried out, "What in the world!" — and, basket in hand, plates rattling, instant destruction threatening her pies, she flew back to the house of Susannah Kuhns. Susannah hurried to the house of Sarah Knerr, and together all sought Bevy, as the only woman connected with any of the three men. Other Millerstonians saw them assembled and the conference grew in numbers.

"The squire and David and Alvin Koehler together at the Mennonite's!" cried Susannah.

"Perhaps he is to marry her and Alvin," suggested a voice at the edge of the crowd.

"David used to sit with her, too, sometimes," Sarah Knerr reminded the others. "Perhaps there is trouble and it will give a court hearing."

"Humbug!" cried Bevy. "You don't know anything about it!"

Bevy, of course, knew nothing about it either.

Almost bursting with curiosity, Bevy made her noodle soup. It was only because she was not a literary person that the delicious portions of dough which gave the soup its name were not cut into exclamation points and question marks. Bevy was suffering; when the squire brought David home with him, her uneasiness became distressing to see. Presently she was thrown into a state bordering on insanity.

David laid down his fork and looked across the table at her restless figure.

"Bevy," said he in an ordinary tone, "the communion set has been found."

"What!" screamed Bevy.

All her speculations had arrived at no such wonderful conclusion as this. The squire looked startled; he had wondered how the report would first reach Millerstown.

"Did Koehler tell?" demanded Bevy. "Did he tell where he put it? Is it any good yet? Will they use it? Did you come to it by accident? Did —" Bevy's breath failed.

"Koehler had nothing to do with it," said David. "My father put it into the hole made by plastering up the window in the church. There it lay all these years."

"He never meant to take it!" screamed Bevy.

"No," agreed David; "I do not believe he meant to take it."

"What *did* he mean?"

"I do not know."

"Does n't anybody know?"

"Nobody knows," interposed the squire. "Now, Bevy, get the pie."

Immediately Bevy started for her kitchen. When after a few minutes she had not reappeared, the squire followed her. The kitchen was empty, no Bevy was to be seen; but from across the yard a loud chattering issued from Edwin's Sally's kitchen.

In the evening the squire and the preacher came and sat with David on his porch. The communion set had been taken from its hiding-place and the preacher's wife had polished it until it was once more bright and beautiful. Millerstown dropped in by twos and threes to behold it, each with his own eyes. The squire and the preacher and David talked about many things of interest to Millerstown and to the world at large. When the two men went away together, they said that David had astonished them.

Later in the evening another man entered the gate and came up to the porch. Oliver Kuhns, the elder, sat down in the chair which the squire had left.

"I heard a strange thing to-day," said he, brokenly. "I cannot understand it. When I was in great trouble, your father helped me. If you want I shall tell Millerstown, I will. I took my money when my father died and went to New York and bad people got me, and when I came home to my wife and little children, I had nothing. Your father lent it to me so she should not find it out, and he would never take it again."

"He would not want you to tell Millerstown," said David.

As Oliver Kuhns, the elder, went out the gate, Jacob Fackenthal came in. He would not sit down.

"Your pop saved me from jail, David," said he. "Anything I can do for you, I will. Nobody in Millerstown believes that he meant to take the communion set. If you will stay in Millerstown, Millerstown will show you what it thinks."

After a long time David went into the great house, through the front door, up the broad stairway to the handsome room which he had selected for his own. He could not understand his mother and father; still, in a measure, they put him away from them. Dimly he comprehended their tragedy, error on one side, refusal to forgive on the other, and heartbreak for both. He thought long of his father and mother. But when he went to sleep, he was thinking of William Koehler and his son Alvin and planning the fitting-out of a little store and the planting of a garden and the purchasing of a flock of chickens and several hives of bees. Old ghosts were laid, old unhappinesses forgotten; from David's consciousness there had vanished even Katy Gaumer, who in a strange way had brought him a blessing.

CHAPTER XXII

KATY IS TO BE EDUCATED AT LAST

Two months passed before Millerstown settled down, from the excited speculation which followed Katy Gaumer's flash of memory and its remarkable effects, into its usual level of excitement. Millerstown was usually excited over something. By the end of two months Sarah Ann and Bevy and Susannah Kuhns had ceased to gather on one another's porches or in one another's houses to discuss the strange Hartmans. By the end of three months all possible explanations had been offered, all possible questions answered, or proved unanswerable. Had Cassie known of the hiding-place of the silver service? Had Cassie died of a broken heart? Did persons ever die of broken hearts? Why, and again why, why, why, did John Hartman push the silver service into the hole? And why, having pushed it in, did John Hartman not take it out? Why had not Katy remembered the strange incident long before this?

"My belief is it *was* to be so," said Susannah Kuhns, a vague conclusion which Millerstown applied to all inexplicable affairs.

In all their speculations, no one ever thought of John Hartman or alluded to John Hartman as a thief. For once, Millerstown accepted the incomprehensible. Of the sad causes of John Hartman's behavior Millerstown knew nothing, could never know anything.

Sarah Ann, being more tender-hearted than the rest, and seeing a little more deeply into the lives of her fellow men and women, thought longest about the Hartmans. Sarah Ann's husband had been a disagreeable and parsimonious man and Sarah Ann knew something of the misery of a divided hearthstone. She often laid down the Millerstown "Star," fascinating as it was with its new stories, of a man driven by house cleaning to suicide in a deep well, of a dog which spoke seven words, or of a snake creeping up a church aisle, and took off her spectacles and thought of the Hartmans and of the Koehlers and of Katy Gaumer's strange part in their affairs.

Millerstown was not entirely deprived of subject-matter by its exhaustion of the Hartman mystery. David Hartman had employed a housekeeper and had opened his great mansion from top to bottom. All Millerstown walked past during the first few days of his occupancy to see whether it was true that there were lights in the parlor and that the squire and the preacher went in and out the front door to visit David. David had been carefully inspecting his orchards and farms, had visited again the land on the mountain-side with its double treasure. David had brought his riding-horse to Millerstown and Millerstown flew once more to doors and windows to see him pass. David consulted with his farmers; David asked a thousand questions of the squire; David was busy from morning till night.

"And David is nice and common," boasted Bevy Schnepp, who behaved as though she were David's mother and grandmother and maiden aunt in one. "He is never proud; you would never know he was so rich and educated."

David had gone himself in midsummer to bring William Koehler home to his house on the mountainside. William seemed to understand now the startling information brought him by the squire and David. At last he realized who David was, and all the kindliness of his intentions. As he drove up the street, his old neighbors came out with pitying looks to speak to him and at his home his daughter-in-law received him with her placid kindness.

An addition had been built to the little house, but otherwise all was as it had been. The garden had been restored, onions and peas and tomatoes had been planted, though July was at hand, so that William might find immediate occupation. Back in the chicken house were cheerful cluckings and crowings, and about the hives the bees buzzed as of old.

At first William tended his garden and sat on the porch in the sunshine and was satisfied and happy. Then he grew restless; the line deepened again in his forehead. It was plainly to be seen that all was not right with William.

But all was made right. One afternoon Sarah Ann Mohr put on her sunbonnet and donned a white apron over her immaculate gingham one and took a basket on her arm and an umbrella in her hand, to be used now for sunshade, now for staff, and climbed the mountain road. She talked with William and gave Essie a little housewifely advice about the making of soap, in which occupation Essie was engaged; she emptied her basket, then she rose to go.

"William," said Sarah Ann, "I have a little plastering that should have been done this long time. I wonder if you would have the time to do it for me?"

It was not every one, Bevy Schnepp said proudly afterwards, who would ride on horseback to Allentown to fetch a mason's white suit and the best kind of trowel, but David had them ready for William in the morning. William accepted them eagerly and began to work at once. Presently he went all about Millerstown. Sometimes he even ventured to the Hartman house to speak to David. David learned after a long while to see him and talk to him without heartache. One day William made in a whisper an astonishing confidence.

"People talk too much about themselves," said William. "I was queer once, out of my head, but I never let on and the people never found it out."

Thus mercifully was the past dulled.

By September Alvin was settled in his store in what had once been a little shoemaker's shop next the post-office. Like the good housewife she was, Essie made the place all clean and tidy and banished all odor of leather. Then the little shop was painted and Alvin's glass cases for ties and collars and the low chairs for the trying on of shoes were put in place. Millerstown was curious, and went to see and remained to buy, and upon them waited Alvin in immaculate if sober clothes. Sometimes, alas! when there was no danger of Essie's coming into the shop, he wore a red necktie!

Alvin had paid his debt to Katy, and in the paying had achieved a moral victory worthy of a braver man. When the little store was planned and the fittings all but bought, he had gone to David Hartman and had confessed his debt.

"She helped me, she was the only one who ever helped me. She thought perhaps something could be made of me. And I could never pay her back."

"She helped you," repeated David. "You could never pay her back."

"That was it," explained Alvin. "When she could not go to school and had all this money, she thought somebody should use it and she helped me."

David blinked rapidly. Then he went to the safe and counted a roll of money into Alvin's hand.

"Go pay your debts, Alvin. The store will be all right."

Alvin started briskly down the street, but his step grew slower and slower. He was, to tell the truth, desperately afraid of Katy Gaumer. Instead of going on to Grandfather Gaumer's he stopped in at the squire's, awful though the squire always seemed.

"Here is Katy's money," said he.

The squire put out a prompt hand and took the money, counted it, and put the roll into his pocket. It was just as well for the development of Alvin's soul that it had not been offered to Katy, who might not have accepted it.

"Thank you," said the squire. "I'll give you a receipt, Alvin. I am coming to your shop to get me a pair of shoes," added the squire with twinkling eyes.

July changed to August and August to September. The cock's-comb in Grandmother Gaumer's garden — it is, to this day, Grandmother Gaumer's garden — thrust its orange and crimson spikes up through the low borders of sweet alyssum, the late roses bloomed, the honeysuckle put out its last and intensely fragrant sprays. In Millerstown busy life went on. Apple-butter boiling impended; already Sarah Ann and Bevy Schnepp saw in their minds' eyes a great kettle suspended from a tripod at the foot of Sarah Ann's yard, from which should presently rise into Sarah Ann's apple tree odors fit to propitiate the angry gods, odors compounded of apples and grape juice and spices. Round this pleasant caldron, with kilted skirts and loud chatterings, the women would move like energetic priestesses, guarding a sacred flame.

There came presently occasional evenings when it was not pleasant to be out of doors, when mothers called their children earlier into the warm kitchens and when men gathered in the store. Fall was at hand; Millerstown became quieter — if, an unobservant, unappreciative stranger would have said, Millerstown could have become any quieter than it was!

But Millerstown was still talking. Millerstown was now interested in another amazing event. Katy Gaumer was going away! The Millerstonians imparted it, the one to the other, with great astonishment.

"She will have her education now," said Sarah Ann with satisfaction. Then Sarah Ann's eyes filled with tears. Katy seemed to her to belong to the past; sometimes, indeed, to Sarah Ann's own generation. "I will miss Katy."

"Going to *school!*" cried little Mary Kuhns, who was now Mrs. Weimer. "Going to school when we are of an age and I have two children!"

"But I am not so fortunate as you, Mary," answered Katy.

Katy spoke with the ease of the preacher or the doctor; she seemed older than all her contemporaries.

"Going to school!" cried Susannah Kuhns. "You will surely be an old maid, Katy!"

"There are worse things to be," said Katy.

"Going to school!" Bevy's outcry was the loudest of all. "*Now! Are* you crazy, Katy?"

"Yes," laughed Katy as of old.

"Do you remember what learning you had?"

"Yes, indeed!"

"Pooh! I forget this long time everything I learned in school. It was mostly A, B, C, I guess. But there are better things than learning. I can cook. Was that why you went so often to the preacher this summer? Were you studying again?"

"Exactly," said Katy.

Bevy looked at her half in admiration, half in disapproval. Katy had reached her full height; her dresses almost touched the floor; her curly braid was coiled on the top of her head; her eyes had darkened. But Katy's mouth smiled as it had smiled when she was a little girl. Bevy felt dimly that here was a different person from Mary Weimer with her babies and Louisa Kuhns, who, married a month, came to the store without having curled her hair.

"But you ought to get married sometime, Katy!" exploded Bevy. The wild dream which Bevy had cherished for her darling had faded. "What will you do in this world all alone?"

Presently Katy's new dresses were finished, her work with the preacher was concluded, and her new trunk was sent out from the county seat. Edwin's Sally and little Adam wept daily. Edwin shook his head solemnly over the impending separation.

In the few days which remained before her departure, the affairs of David Hartman and the Koehlers and the prospective apple-butter boilings were entirely forgotten. The gifts of friends who came to say good-bye would have filled two trunks, if Aunt Sally had not wisely discriminated between them.

"What will you do with three woolen quilts, Katy, when I gave you already nice blankets? These we will put in a chest in the garret. It will go for your Haus Steir [wedding outfit]."

Susannah Kuhns brought two jars of peaches and a glass or two of jelly, being firmly of the conviction that boarding-schools and colleges were especially constructed for the starving of the young.

"The English people do not eat anyhow like we do. I was once to some English people in Allentown and they had no spread at all for on their bread. Now you will have spreads, Katy."

Finally even Alvin Koehler caught the spirit and brought a present for Katy, a tie from his store. Alvin allowed no cloudy recollections of the past to darken his sunshine.

Sarah Ann came, too, with a silk quilt and a silk sofa pillow of the "Log Cabin" pattern, the product of long saving of brightly colored scraps.

"You are to have these things, Katy," said she. "You would 'a' had them anyhow when I was gone, and —"

"Now, Sarah Ann!" laughed Katy. "That will be years to come, Sarah Ann!"

Thus cheered, Sarah Ann dried her tears.

"Everybody in Millerstown is sorry you are going away," said she. "You are like the church or the schoolhouse, you are ours."

"I love Millerstown," said Katy: "I love Millerstown dearly."

Presently the trunk was packed, the last day was at hand. The squire came to a dinner such as Grandmother Gaumer used to prepare on holidays. He was as excited as a child over the prospect of his journey with Katy in the morning. He would see her established; it was almost as though he were going to school himself!

Aunt Sally refused any help with the dishes. Katy must not work; she might read, she might sew, she might go to see Sarah Ann, she might walk with little Adam to the schoolhouse, but she should not lay hand to dish-towel on her last day in Millerstown!

Katy chose the taking of little Adam to school. With his hand held tight in hers, she went out the gate, past the garden, and along the open fields toward the church and the schoolhouse set on the hill together. She glanced into the schoolroom, a dull place now, no longer the scene of the prancings of a Belsnickel or the triumphs of a studious Katy; then, leaving Adam, she set off toward the mountain road. From the first ascent she looked down at the house of David Hartman. The foliage about it was thinning; she was near enough to see the golden and scarlet flowers in the garden and a cat sleeping comfortably on the wide porch. She saw David almost daily, taking the two steps into the squire's office at a bound, sitting in his father's pew at church, riding about on his tall gray horse. She could not help hearing Millerstown's discussions of his doings, of his generosity to the Koehlers, of his subscriptions to the church, of his free-and-easy ways.

Presently there was a sudden motion on the Hartman porch; a tall figure appeared, the cat rose and went with arched back to meet her master, a clear whistle lifted to the ears of Katy. She started and went on her way, angry with herself for watching. She meant to climb to the Sheep Stable and sit there upon the great rock and look down upon the valley. There she could be alone, there she could look her fill upon Millerstown, there she could fortify herself for the future.

Before the Koehler house, William was puttering about in the yard. He called to her and gave her some flowers. He had been told of Katy's part in his deliverance, and though he seemed to have forgotten the specific reason for his kindly feeling toward her, he was more friendly only with David Hartman. He seemed not so much to have lost his mind and found it as to have harked back to his childhood.

Walking more rapidly after this delay, Katy went up the mountain road. The afternoon would pass all too quickly.

"I cannot make many plans," said Katy, soberly, as she went along. "If I make plans there is a hex on them. I must educate myself for whatever comes.

It would be easier to educate myself if I were sure that something would come!" cried Katy, with sudden passion. "But there is nothing any more before me!"

The woods thickened; there was the chatter of an angry squirrel, a flash of gold as a flicker floated downward through the sunshine, showing the bright lining of his wings; there was the rich odor of ripening nuts, of slippery elm. On each side of the road and arching above rose the flaming trees, the golden brown beeches, the yellow hickories and maples, the crimson oaks. It was a beautiful, beautiful world, though one's heart was sad.

At the Sheep Stable Katy climbed out on the rocky parapet and sat with half-closed, half-blinded eyes. There was not a cloud in the sky; all was clear and bright. Far to the right lay the county seat; in the middle distance stood the blast furnace, the smoke rising lazily from its chimney; far away against the horizon rose the Blue Ridge with its three gaps where the Lehigh and the Schuylkill and the Delaware Rivers made their way through its barrier to the sea.

Directly below lay Millerstown, thickly shaded, still. Looking upon it, Katy felt her eyes fill with tears. She could see the golden light which the maples cast now upon its streets; she could see also the blanket of snow which would presently cover it, the moonlight which would light it enchantingly.

"But I will not be here!" mourned Katy. "Everything will go on in the same way, but I will not be here. I will be far away with those who do not know me. But I will not forget!" cried Katy. "I will not forget anything. I will have Millerstown graven on my heart!"

Then Katy bent her head. She was still cruelly obsessed. She thought of David Hartman, of his steady, gray eyes; she thought of his great house, of his fine mind, of his great prospects. Katy had grown up; remembering now the affection of her youth, she set her teeth and wept. Life and love were not devotion to a pair of dark eyes; life and love meant growth of one's heart and soul and mind, they meant possessions and power and great experiences which she could not now define. David was them all. Katy was not worldly or calculating, she had only learned to understand herself aright.

"I would like to talk to him," said Katy. "I would like him to know that I have some sense at last. Then I could be more satisfied to go away."

Then Katy turned her head and looked round at the little path which led through the woodland to the parapeted rock. The winding mountain road was out of sight from the Sheep Stable; a person could approach close to the little plateau without being seen. A rustle of the leaves betrayed a visitor. He walked briskly, leaping over rocks, thrusting aside branches like one whose mind is not upon the way but upon the goal. From the porch of his house he had seen Katy climbing the hill.

He lifted himself to a seat on the great rock beside Katy and raised his hand to shelter his eyes while he looked over the wide prospect.

"It's beautiful up here, is n't it, Katy?"

Katy caught her breath. Her chance to talk had come; she seemed to be filling her lungs to make the best of it. "Yes," said she.

"I'm sorry I frightened you." David did not speak very earnestly; his apology was perfunctory, as though he would just as soon have frightened her as not.

"It's all right," said Katy.

David looked about the little plateau. There was the little cairn; he wondered, with amusement whether he had taken all evidences of his early wickedness away. Then he looked smilingly down upon his companion, who seemed unable to make use of the air which she had taken into her lungs, but sat silently with scarlet cheeks. The cheeks flushed now a still more brilliant color.

"We've met here before," said David, still smiling.

Katy filled her lungs with air again.

"I was *abominable*," she confessed, trembling. She began to be a little frightened. Here she had laid hands on David, had taken sides with his enemy, had thrust him violently down upon the ground, had screamed insulting things at him. She had a cold fear that he might be going to punish her for that miserable, compromising episode.

But David's tone was fairly pleasant.

"Yes," he agreed, "you were."

Katy's head bent a little lower. She said to herself that all the education in the world would not remove the hateful stain of her association with poor Alvin. There was nothing she could say, though she had now ample opportunity; all she could do would be to remove herself as soon as possible from close proximity to this tall, gray figure, to the amused smile of these gray eyes. A moth on a pin could flutter no more feebly than Katy fluttered inwardly.

"I wish you would forgive me," said she, by way of preparation for a humble departure.

"But I won't," replied David. "I won't forgive you ever."

Katy's heart beat more and more rapidly. Was he really going to punish her in some strange way? Was he — she glanced rapidly about, then remembered how firmly that hand beside her controlled the great horse. There was no escape unless he let her go.

Then, in spite of herself, Katy looked up, to find David looking down upon her. An incredible notion came into her mind, an astounding premonition of what he meant to say. If she had waited an instant David would have spoken, would have mastered the overwhelming fear that, after all, the hunger of his heart was not to be satisfied. But being still Katy, she could not wait, would not wait, but rushed once more into speech, broken, tearful.

"I was crazy in my youth," gasped Katy. "I was *wild*. I cannot understand myself. Perhaps there are years when we are crazy. But I got over it. I got some sense. I was made to have sense. Trouble came upon me. I was tamed. Then I went to live at your house and I read your books, and you used to come home, and you were so wise and — and — so — so different from *everybody* —" Did any one think for an instant that Katy's day of romance was past? — "I thought it would kill me because I had been such a fool and you knew it. I thought you must do worse than hate me, I thought you must despise me. I thought —"

David put out his arm. With shaking voice he laughed.

"Oh, foolishness!" said David. He bent his cheek upon her forehead. "I have loved you as long as I can remember, Katy."

Katy clasped her hands across her beating heart, and closed her eyes.

"I am not prepared," said she in a whisper. "I am not educated! I am nothing! But, oh!" cried Katy Gaumer in the language of the Sunday-School book, "If you will give me a little time, I will bring home my sheaves!"

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